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THE Nation.

OBAMA & PROGRESSIVES
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TALKING WITH TEHRAN

OCTOBER 26, 2009
TheNation.com

CAN THE US AND IRAN NEGOTIATE AN END TO THE NUCLEAR STANDOFF?

ROBERT DREYFUSS

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"A BRILLIANT AND IMPORTANT BOOK. Stephen Cohen is one of the world's foremost thinkers about Russia — its past, present and future."
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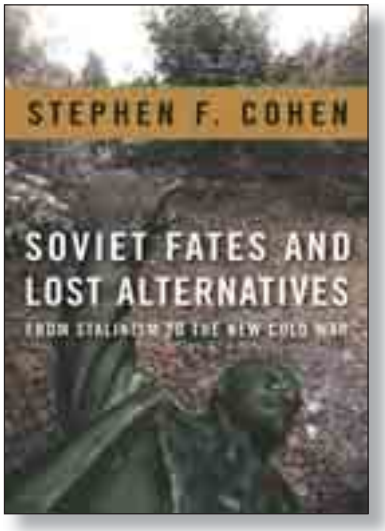

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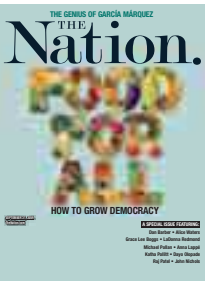
Letters



Worldwatch Focuses on Africa

WASHINGTON, D.C.
Many thanks to *The Nation* and Food First for alerting readers to the need for increased funding in African agriculture. A main goal of our work is to put a much-needed spotlight on farmer organizations and NGOs in Africa, the very organizations and individuals that Raj Patel, Eric Holt-Gimenez and Annie Shattuck rightfully assert are essential to any real discussion of sustainable agriculture there ["Letters," Oct. 19]. The culmination of this project will be the report "State of the World 2011," with a focus on hunger. We are working directly with farmer organizations and groups on the ground in Africa as well as African journalists to tell the as yet untold stories of triumph in this region.

Patel et al. ask if money might have been better spent disseminating proven knowledge within Africa. That is exactly what we hope to do. Through Worldwatch's worldwide network and its audience of government officials, policy-makers, journalists and NGOs, we will share the report with key stakeholders, including local farmers and policy-makers. We believe these stories will inspire action, and that innovations in sustainable agriculture will consequently be implemented on a larger scale.

We realize that this project will be standing on the shoulders of giants, including the International Agricultural Assessment of Science and Technology for Development, which was released last year. We envision the report as a continuation of this work, which will make IAASTD's findings more accessible to a wider audience and offer concrete recommendations. Two key audiences for it will be the agricultural funding community, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and farmers and farmer groups.

Patel et al. expressed concern that the framing of this project could be skewed. Since its inception in 1974, Worldwatch has maintained a solid reputation as a broker of independent, unbiased research. We bring our unwavering objectivity and dedication to truth to the Nourishing the Planet project. Worldwatch comes to this project without any pre-drawn conclusions or expectations of what the findings will be. And although it is too early to share all our conclusions, there is strong opinion (and good evidence) that farmer-driven work—whether farmer-run seed banks, farmer-run marketing cooperatives or farmer-run research—can be instrumental in reducing poverty and hunger.

BRIAN HALWEIL, DANIELLE NIERENBERG
Worldwatch Institute
Project directors, "State of the World 2011"

letters@thenation.com

More Letters on Our 'Food for All' Issue

PUYALLUP, WASH.
Your food democracy issue was superb ["Food for All," Sept. 21]. A recurring theme was the challenge of democratizing food growing and distribution in the face of competition from the "real" economy, with its subsidies and capital. We need to link the issue to the notion of alternative currencies, like Burlington Bread (other examples: Ithaca Hours, Bay Bucks, Berk Shares). Burlington Bread is a local currency used around Burlington, Vermont, and accepted by merchants and even the county, for taxes. As a local exchange medium, it allows people to earn wages and exchange them for food and services without depending on banks or Wall Street (see the Burlington Currency Project).

ELI BERNIKER

BERKELEY, CALIF.
Community gardens are nifty, but most food comes from large capital- and chemical-intensive industrialized farms. This will continue until anti-trust laws are used to bust up the monopolies of grain traders, dairy and cereal processors, and other sectors of the food industry—and until the issue of commodity *price* is addressed. For the past half-century, prices have been held so low farmers couldn't meet the cost of production, and millions of small farms couldn't afford to continue.

Milk prices are down to $12 per hundredweight; the typical cost of production

(continued on page 24)

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Help Wanted

President Obama caught a break when the International Olympic Committee rejected his personal appeal to stage the 2016 games in Chicago. The minor ruckus diverted attention, at least for a day, from the dire news that unemployment had reached 9.8 percent. But in the long run, unemployment, especially if it hits double digits, will define, and potentially undermine, Obama's presidency.

EDITORIAL

The 9.8 percent figure may be a twenty-six-year high, but it's actually a lowball fantasy. The number of Americans who cannot find work now tops 15 million; the number working part-time jobs because they can't find full-time ones is above 9 million. Add frustrated job seekers who have long since given up looking, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics puts the unemployment/underemployment rate at 17 percent.

That figure is jarring, as is the prospect that the country could experience a W-shaped recession, taking another dive before it climbs back up. If Obama's "green shoots" recovery withers, he will long for the happy days of 2009.

Except for a military threat, no issue confronting a president is more serious than widespread unemployment. Without movement toward job creation, many Congressional Democrats could find *themselves* on the unemployment line after the 2010 election. The party's key gains in 2006 and '08 came in Great Lakes and Midwestern swing states, now reeling from sharp job losses. If Democrats suffer serious setbacks in just a handful of industrial states, Obama's ability to act on a range of issues will be more constrained than it is now.

Savvy members of Congress recognize the urgency. House Education and Labor Committee chair George Miller of California is entertaining wise proposals to increase funding for employment and training of low-income youth, an especially hard-hit group. There are also proposals to extend unemployment benefits, which is crucial since the unemployed now spend on average more than twenty-six weeks looking for work, the longest stretch since the Labor Department began collecting this data in 1948.

But unemployment benefits extensions and retraining schemes are not sufficient. Americans need jobs—millions of them—and if the private sector is not going to create them, then the government must. Facing record budget shortfalls, states and municipalities have had to lay off record numbers of public workers and are also in dire need of aid from Washington. One promising idea involves extending tax credits to businesses that hire more workers.

Call it a second stimulus or a new New Deal. But the administration and Congress cannot delay, and they cannot get spooked by deficit projections—the perennial excuse for inaction. As former Labor Secretary Robert Reich puts it, "The federal government should be spending even more than it already is on roads and bridges and schools and parks and everything else we need. It should make up for cutbacks at the state level, and then some. This is the only way to put Americans back to work.... When one out of six Americans is unemployed or underemployed, this is no time to worry about the debt."

When talk of green shoots turns into jobs and prosperity for ordinary Americans, there will be time to focus on debt reduction. But widespread and expanding unemployment cannot be ignored any longer. The president must go for the gold: he must propose sweeping initiatives to keep the jobs America has and create the jobs America needs.

Page 25: Leonard Cohen's Afterworld

Inside

2 Letters

Editorials & Comment

3 **Help Wanted**
4 **Climate Roulette**
MARK HERTSGAARD
5 **Noted**
6 **Capitolism**
Tuesdays With Rahm
CHRISTOPHER HAYES

Columns

6 **Deadline Poet**
What Whoopi Goldberg, Harvey Weinstein et al. Are Saying…
CALVIN TRILLIN
8 **Quagmires**
ROBERT GROSSMAN
9 **The Liberal Media**
Where Have You Gone, William Safire?
ERIC ALTERMAN
10 **Beneath the Radar**
Obama and the Decline of White America
GARY YOUNGE

Articles

11 **Talking With Tehran**
ROBERT DREYFUSS
16 **Memo to Investigators: Dig Deep**
The first step toward lasting financial reform is to identify the roots of the crisis.
WILLIAM GREIDER
21 **Beyond Rescue**
The campaign against forced prostitution works when it addresses victims' needs.
NOY THRUPKAEW

Books & the Arts

25 **Waiting for the Miracle**
DAVID YAFFE
28 **Barnes:** Nothing to Be Frightened Of
Critchley: The Book of Dead Philosophers
ALEXANDER PROVAN
32 **Thin Shangdu** (POEM)
CATHY PARK HONG
34 **Films:** Wild Grass • Araya
STUART KLAWANS

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This week at TheNation.com

News & Analysis

Julian Sanchez: Patriot Act under scrutiny

Antonio Gonzalez & Miguel Tinker Salas: Civic revolutions in Latin America

Greg Kaufmann: Do they take us for shmucks?

Books Phoebe Connelly on Jean Rhys

Blogs John Nichols: Will Obama meet with the "Rethink Afghanistan" caucus?

Video Christopher Hayes: Breaking down the bailout

Poll What do you think of the Obama/McChrystal clash?

Climate Roulette

They say that everyone who finally gets it about climate change has an "Oh, shit" moment—an instant when the full scientific implications become clear and they suddenly realize what a horrifically dangerous situation humanity has created for itself. Listening to the speeches, groundbreaking in their way, that President Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao delivered September 22 at the UN Summit on Climate Change, I was reminded of my most recent "Oh, shit" moment.

COMMENT

It came in July, courtesy of the chief climate adviser to the German government. Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, chair of an advisory council known by its German acronym, WBGU, is a physicist whose specialty, fittingly, is chaos theory. Speaking to an invitation-only conference at New Mexico's Santa Fe Institute, Schellnhuber divulged the findings of a study so new he had not yet briefed Chancellor Angela Merkel about it. The study has now been published. If its conclusions are correct—and Schellnhuber ranks among the world's half-dozen most eminent climate scientists—it has monumental implications for the pivotal meeting in December in Copenhagen, where world leaders will try to agree on reversing global warming.

Schellnhuber and his WBGU colleagues go a giant step beyond the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the UN body whose scientific reports are constrained because the world's governments must approve their contents. The IPCC says that rich industrial countries must cut emissions 25 to 40 percent by 2020 (from 1990 levels) if the world is to have a fair chance of avoiding catastrophic climate change. By contrast, the WBGU study says the United States must cut emissions 100 percent by 2020—i.e., quit carbon entirely within ten years. Germany, Italy and other industrial nations must do the same by 2025 to 2030. China only has until 2035, and the world as a whole must be carbon-free by 2050. The study adds that big polluters can delay their day of reckoning by "buying" emissions rights from developing countries, a step the study estimates would extend some countries' deadlines by a decade or so.

Needless to say, this timetable is light-years more demanding than what the world's major governments are talking about in the run-up to Copenhagen. The European Union has pledged 20 percent reductions by 2020, which it will increase to 30 percent if others—like the United States—do the same. Japan's new prime minister likewise has promised 25 percent reductions by 2020 if others do the same. Obama didn't mention a number, but the Waxman-Markey bill, which he supports, would deliver less than 5 percent reductions by 2020. Obama's silence—doubtless a function of the fact that Republicans are implacably opposed to serious emissions cuts—allowed Hu to claim the higher ground at the UN. Hu went further than any Chinese leader has before, pledging to curb greenhouse gas emissions growth by a "notable margin" by 2020. Obama dropped his own bombshell, however, urging that all G-20 governments phase out subsidies for fossil fuels. "The time we have to reverse this tide is running out," Obama declared. Alas, the WBGU study suggests that our time is in fact all but gone.

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Noted.

NO APOLOGIES: After Senator **Max Baucus** kicked the public option to the curb, it was starting to look like Congressional Democrats would blow this fall's healthcare fight. Then **Alan Grayson**, a freshman Congressman from Orlando, started landing punches. On September 29 Grayson announced on the House floor that the Republican healthcare plan is this: "Don't get sick; and if you do get sick, die quickly." When the GOP's inevitable clamor for an apology arose, Grayson, who hails from a swing district, responded: "I would like to apologize.… I apologize to the dead and their families that we haven't voted sooner to end this holocaust in America."

So shaken by the prospect of a Democrat taking the healthcare debate seriously enough to try to win it, Republican operatives screeched that Grayson had "come unhinged." In fact, Grayson—a Harvard Law grad who worked as an assistant to conservative icon **Robert Bork** and Supreme Court Justices **Ruth Bader Ginsburg** and **Antonin Scalia** before establishing himself as a top trial lawyer—had set a trap for the GOP. He had used the controversy to focus attention on a study revealing that 44,000 Americans die annually because they lack health insurance. While he acknowledged that the holocaust reference went over the top, Grayson kept taunting "knuckle-dragging Neanderthal" Republicans. And they kept responding in a manner that earned the Congressman air time to detail the real cost of saying no to healthcare reform. JOHN NICHOLS

DADT REVERSAL? The latest issue of **Joint Force Quarterly**, a military journal reviewed and published by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, contained a seven-page critique of "don't ask, don't tell" (DADT). The study's author, an Air Force colonel, argues that DADT has been "costly both in personnel and treasure" and that allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly "will not impact combat effectiveness."

The article is another sign that momentum is behind gay-rights advocates as they move toward a debate on the policy in Congress. In the House, the bill to repeal DADT has 176 co-sponsors, and Armed Services Committee chair **Ike Skelton** has agreed to a hearing at the beginning of next year. A Senate bill could be introduced in the next few weeks. It's there that Congressman **Barney Frank**, a leading critic of DADT, expects a filibuster. "It will have a majority," says Frank, but "the question is whether it will get to sixty."

The House bill's lead sponsor, Iraq War veteran **Patrick Murphy**, told *The Nation*, "This is a policy that's un-American and needs to be changed." During the campaign, Obama made just such a promise, but he has been criticized by gay-rights advocates for moving too slowly. Frank says that building support among ex-military service members for repealing the policy will be crucial. In particular, he cites the endorsement of retired Gen. **Colin Powell**, who helped draft the policy some sixteen years ago.

"Clearly things have moved," Frank said. "I think we've had the votes in Congress for some time, but we didn't have a president ready to sign it." NATHANIEL HERZ

GREECE GOES SOCIALIST: Going against the European grain, Greece has voted **George Papandreou**'s center-left **PaSoK** party into power in a landslide. Promising a new political culture, an end to cronyism and a 3 billion euro stimulus package, the president of the **Socialist International** has at last won the job that was once held by his father and grandfather. But despite being to the manor born, Papandreou is neither a lightweight nor a populist demagogue in the style of his father, Andreas. Mild-mannered and thoughtful, he is a new Papandreou for the age of Obama: an American-born, European social democrat with a green conscience and a cosmopolitan worldview.

His victory is not a sign that Europe is leaning left. It is a local phenomenon, the product of Greece's recent political history. PaSoK lost power to the conservative **New Democracy** in 2004 after eleven years in office, during which it became a byword for paybacks and corruption. New Democracy's **Kostas Karamanlis** (also the scion of a political dynasty) took over with a promise to clean out the Augean stables. But New Democracy's corruption made PaSoK's scandals look like minor peccadilloes. Overpriced government bonds were sold to state pension funds; cabinet ministers dreamed up lucrative property scams with abbots from Mount Athos. On Karamanlis's watch, vast tracts of the country went up in flames, literally—and the fire service, weakened by political interference, did too little much too late. For a few days last December, violence in Athens gripped the world's TV cameras. The shooting of a 15-year-old boy by a trigger-happy policeman seemed to sum up the state's indifference to a whole generation.

It will be a Sisyphean task to root out the corruption bred by decades of patronage politics, foster a culture of citizenship and sell Greece's quick-profit entrepreneurs on sustainable development. Vested interests, old behavior patterns, inertia and plain greed will rub the glow off the election promises the way they always do. But Papandreou's promises are at least the right ones. For this diaspora Greek, the relief is almost thrilling. MARIA MARGARONIS

BROKEN SHIELD: As a candidate, **Barack Obama** heartily endorsed the **Free Flow of Information Act**, which establishes a federal law shielding reporters from having to divulge confidential sources in court. It wasn't a radical act; the measure mirrors "shield laws" already on the books in thirty-six states. But it was necessary, as a 2003 court ruling attacked the principle that reporters who expose wrongdoing can cite the First Amendment in order to protect sources.

Unfortunately, the Obama administration is trying to gut the shield law legislation, proposing a rewrite that would give judges exceptionally broad authority to demand the names of sources for stories involving national security. The administration also wants to give judges latitude to require revelations of the names of sources in civil cases, a shift that would stifle corporate whistleblowers. The **Society of Professional Journalists** says the changes would "render useless" the shield law. Even more unsettling is the notion that a former constitutional law professor's machinations could permanently undermine the First Amendment's freedom of the press and speech protections. JOHN NICHOLS

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Obama, like other G-8 leaders, agreed in July to limit the global temperature rise to 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above the preindustrial level at which human civilization developed. Schellnhuber, addressing the Santa Fe conference, joked that the G-8 leaders had agreed to the 2C limit "probably because they don't know what it means." In fact, even the "brutal" timeline of the WBGU study, Schellnhuber cautioned, would not guarantee staying within the 2C target. It would merely give humanity a two-out-of-three chance of doing so—"worse odds than Russian roulette," he wryly noted. "But it is the best we can do." To have a three-out-of-four chance, countries would have to quit carbon even sooner. Likewise, we could decide to wait another decade or so to halt all greenhouse emissions, but this lowers the odds of hitting the 2C target to fifty-fifty. "And what kind of precautionary principle is that?" Schellnhuber asked.

There is a fundamental political assumption underlying the WBGU study: that the right to emit greenhouse gases is shared equally by all people on earth. Known in diplomatic circles as "the per capita principle," this approach has long been insisted upon by China and most other developing countries and thus is seen as essential to an agreement in Copenhagen, though among G-8 leaders only Merkel has endorsed it. The WBGU study applies the per capita principle to the world population of 7 billion people and arrives at an annual emissions quota of 2.7 tons of carbon dioxide per person. That's harsh news for Americans, who emit 20 tons per person annually, and it explains why the US deadline is the most imminent. But China won't welcome this news either. Its combination of high annual emissions and huge population gives it a deadline only a few years later than Europe's and Japan's.

"I myself was terrified when I saw these numbers," Schellnhuber said. He urges governments to agree in Copenhagen to launch "a Green Apollo Project." Like John Kennedy's pledge to land a man on the moon in ten years, a global Green Apollo Project would aim to put leading economies on a trajectory of zero carbon emissions within ten years. Combined with carbon trading with low-emissions countries, Schellnhuber says, such a "wartime mobilization" might still save us from the worst impacts of climate change. The alternative is more and more "Oh, shit" moments for all of us. MARK HERTSGAARD

Mark Hertsgaard (markhertsgaard.com), a fellow of The Nation Institute, is The Nation*'s environment correspondent.*

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

What Whoopi Goldberg ('Not a Rape-Rape'), Harvey Weinstein ('So-Called Crime') et al. Are Saying in Their Outrage Over The Arrest of Roman Polanski

A youthful error? Yes, perhaps.
But he's been punished for this lapse—
For decades exiled from LA
He knows, as he wakes up each day,
He'll miss the movers and the shakers.
He'll never get to see the Lakers.
For just one old and small mischance,
He has to live in Paris, France.
He's suffered slurs and other stuff.
Has he not suffered quite enough?
How can these people get so riled?
He only raped a single child.

Why make him into some Darth Vader
For sodomizing one eighth grader?
This man is brilliant, that's for sure—
Authentically, a film auteur.
He gets awards that are his due.
He knows important people, too—
Important people just like us.
And we know how to make a fuss.
Celebrities would just be fools
To play by little people's rules.
So Roman's banner we unfurl.
He only raped one little girl.

Tuesdays With Rahm

If you've spent time in progressive circles these last nine months, you've certainly heard the "make me do it" story. The details bounce around, even the name of the president who allegedly said it (sometimes it's Johnson, most often it's Roosevelt), but the basic tale is this: the president is meeting in the Oval Office with an activist, a union president or a civil rights leader pushing a progressive cause. At the end of the meeting the president says, "OK, you've convinced me. Now go out and make me do it." The moral is a good one: change comes only through organized pressure on elected officials, even putative allies. But the fable, as Robert Borosage recently pointed out to me, is misleading. "The story is apocryphal. No president likes to be pressured. FDR loathed Huey Long and was often furious at the unions. Johnson was constantly trying to get King to call off the demonstrations—and his FBI bugged King. And yet King forced him to do what he would otherwise have been unable to do."

The Obama White House is no different. From day one the administration has pursued a strategy of keeping its progressive allies on the White House playbook. In a weekly Tuesday night

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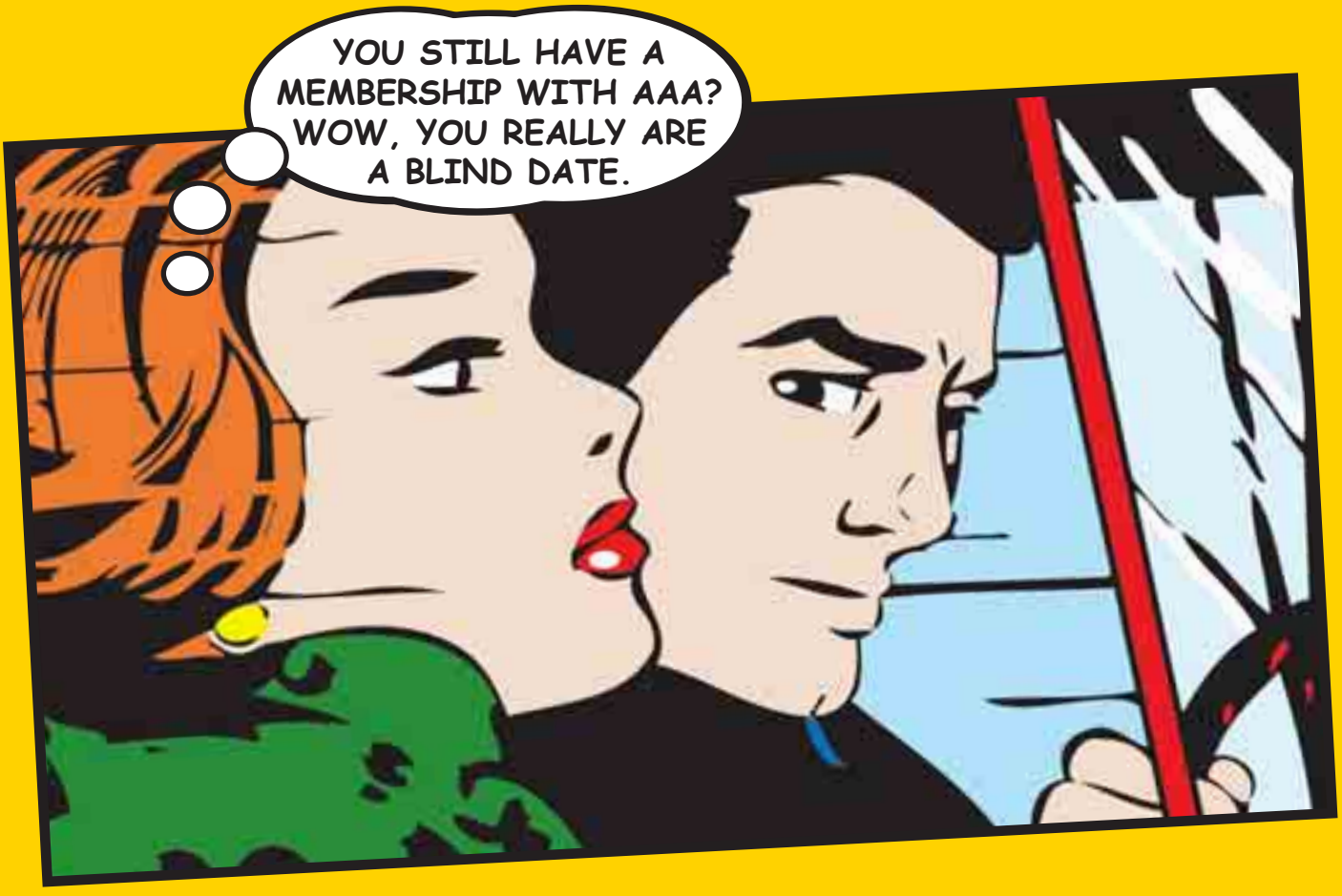

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- Auto insurance for hybrid drivers (in many states)
- Hybrid rental cars and eco-travel

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meeting called Common Purpose, representatives from dozens of well-established progressive groups—environmental organizations, labor unions, MoveOn, Planned Parenthood, Human Rights Campaign and others—gather at the Capital Hilton to meet with White House reps. According to about a half-dozen people who attend, the meeting is generally run by deputy chief of staff Jim Messina and attended by political director Patrick Gaspard, as well as staff from Organizing for America. Often the White House will bring in policy experts to give briefings on legislation such as healthcare or financial reform. Once in a while David Axelrod or Rahm Emanuel shows up. Although the meetings are strictly off the record (therefore, everyone who spoke with me insisted on anonymity), accounts of them occasionally leak to the press. In August several outlets reported Emanuel's chastisement of some attendees for targeting Blue Dog Democrats wavering on reform. Anyone who went after Democrats, he reportedly said, was "fucking stupid."

Mostly, though, the meetings are a chance for the White House to communicate its message. "They're pretty useful," one attendee told me, "simply by virtue of the fact that they lay out their schedule, and they review the messaging. If that's all it was, it's better than not knowing that shit. But there's also the value of having all these progressive group players at the same time in the same place every week. It means that our networking is better." During the day on Tuesday, before the evening meeting, three working groups—on healthcare, energy and financial reform—meet, usually with White House people there only for the beginning of the meeting. When faced with the kind of sustained, ferocious, implacable opposition campaign waged during the August recess, the meetings provide a useful platform for coordinating response and pushback. "Healthcare has been pretty good," the same attendee told me. "The most obvious example was the town hall pushback, even though the MSM stopped covering it. From an organizing perspective, we did a fabulous job of turning people out and winning the ground game. It was really 180 degrees from beginning to end, and that had an impact on elected representatives. That's the kind of thing I think wouldn't have happened if we weren't in the habit of meeting every single week."

But if there's useful communication at the Tuesday meetings, it tends to go in one direction, attendees told me. "They want to make sure the advocates are informed, and there's a lot of message control," another regular said. "But there's not a ton of dialogue back and forth and not a ton of true gritty political discussion." Indeed, many of the groups, several people said, seem happy enough to be in the room and wary of openly confronting the administration in such an open forum. This means the White House doesn't get to hear an unvarnished version of where the base is coming from. Several people say that dynamic prevented the White House from grasping how important the public option was to progressives, causing the administration to be caught off guard when people mobilized around it.

If access is the carrot the White House dangles in front of progressive groups, being frozen out of the meetings or, worse, having funding squeezed, is the stick. "There's no question that the big donors are funding the groups that are helping to pass the president's program," said one attendee. "And they're not particularly interested in funding groups that are challenging the president's program."

What seems to get the White House most riled up is when organizations target Democrats. That's what invited Rahm's reproach in August, and it continues to be the quickest way to get on the White House's bad side. "When groups are hitting [Congress] members, they go and cry to the White House," said another attendee. "Then the White House comes to the meeting and says, Don't go after our allies." (MoveOn, which has raised money for ads that target conservative Democrats, continues to attend meetings regularly.)

By wielding the threat of cutting off access, the White House, some feel, has co-opted most of Washington's center-left. Jane Hamsher of Firedoglake, who has waged a spirited and relentless campaign to pressure Democrats to pledge to support only a heathcare bill with a public option, derisively refers to the Tuesday meetings as the "veal pen."

It's not surprising to find the White House in the incumbent-protection business, but its shielding of Blue Dogs from progressive groups' pressuring has the perverse—and maddening—effect of imperiling the very policies (public option, a good cap-and-trade bill) it claims to want passed. And almost certainly, had progressives followed the White House lead on healthcare—focusing their fire on Republicans, defending the White House no matter what it put forward—the public option would have long since been killed off. A recent report in the *Los Angeles Times* that the president is working senators behind the scenes in an attempt to get the public option into the final bill seems to demonstrate the "make me do it" dynamic, much as the White House would be loath to admit that.

CHRISTOPHER HAYES

QUAGMIRES

by ROBERT GROSSMAN

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Eric Alterman

Where Have You Gone, William Safire?

Perhaps the most frightening recent political development—more frightening even than the rising ratings of the lunatic Glenn Beck—is the manner in which the crazies to and for whom Beck speaks have managed to hijack our national discourse. Seeing obviously disturbed individuals screaming insupportable epithets at their representatives would have been expected to repel most Americans and increase sympathy for Barack Obama (just as the excesses of the antiwar movement made President Nixon more popular). And yet, inexplicably, these hysterical hyenas who call our president a Nazi, a Commie and a Kenyan have had exactly the opposite effect on their fellow citizens. A poll published this summer found that, among independents, a plurality of 35 percent to 16 percent felt that the outlandish opposition to President Obama had diminished their support for healthcare reform.

I can't explain this. But I can observe that it has pushed the mainstream media further to the right. Throw in Beck's hounding out of office Obama's green jobs adviser, Van Jones, together with the successful, multipronged hit job on ACORN, and you have the makings of yet another panic among media mavens eager to double down on their pandering to the ref-working right-wingers.

"Complaints by conservatives are slower to be picked up by non-ideological media because there are not enough conservatives and too many liberals in most newsrooms," says Tom Rosenstiel, director of the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, to *Washington Post* ombudsman Andrew Alexander. "Even the suspicion of a bias is a problem all by itself," says the same Mr. Rosenstiel to Clark Hoyt, public editor of the *New York Times*. "We are not well-enough informed about conservative issues. It's particularly a problem in a town so dominated by Democrats and the Democratic point of view," worries *Washington Post* executive editor Marcus Brauchli as he instructs his staff to beat the dying horse of the ACORN story. The *Times*, meanwhile, is judged to be demonstrating "insufficient tuned-in-ness to the issues that are dominating Fox News and talk radio," according to its managing editor, Jill Abramson.

Note that there is no consideration here of whether the whining right-wingers have any substance to their case. The mere fact of their unhappiness is evidence enough, and reporters and editors are guilty as charged. Note also that nobody seems to remember that these same newspapers spent much of the past decade repeating and amplifying the lies and distortions of the Bush administration and its allies—and the decade before that parroting Gingrichite attacks on Bill Clinton—and the decade before that praising the genius of… well, you get the picture.

We've seen where this cravenness leads. The *Times* humiliated itself by inviting conservative counter-intellectual William Kristol onto its op-ed page. At the time, editorial page editor Andrew Rosenthal dismissed criticism as "intolerant," "absurd" and indicative of a "weird fear of opposing views." But, of course, Kristol soon proved his critics correct with his willingness to play fast and loose with facts in support of his ideological teammates, whether in Washington, Baghdad or Anchorage (which apparently qualified him as an ideal candidate for the *Post* op-ed page, where he now appears). Bernard-Henri Lévy identified the essence of Kristol's anti-intellectual modus operandi after meeting him in the offices of *The Weekly Standard* in 2004. Upon Lévy's mention of "an article crammed with the vilest gossip" about Clinton, Lévy wrote, Kristol appeared annoyed. "Don't jump to the conclusion that I believe in it, he seems to be saying. That's just the deal, you understand—supporting a crusade for moral values is just the price we have to pay for a foreign policy that we can defend as a whole." Lévy quite properly found this ethos intellectually offensive. "Because you're in agreement about Iraq, do you have to force yourself to agree with the death penalty, creationism, the Christian Coalition and its pestilential practices? When I have dinner with someone in a restaurant, do I have to order all the courses on the menu?"

I raise this issue today because the hiring of Kristol was portrayed as "Pinch" Sulzberger's attempt to match the magic of the pick by his father, Punch, of William Safire, who died recently, for the op-ed page nearly four decades earlier. Both were hacks when hired, argued the apologists, and yet Safire evolved into the most feared and respected pundit of his time.

After a disastrous beginning, Safire learned to use his extensive political contacts, knowledge of the political process and felicitous prose to school the rest of the punditocracy in how to make one's work matter. He cajoled, he flattered, he threatened and sometimes he shaded the truth. Safire once bragged to me that he always wrote "105 percent of what I know." He made some egregious mistakes and wrote more than a few indefensible columns, none more so than his repeated insistence on a bogus pre-9/11 Prague meeting between Mohamed Atta and the head of Iraq's intelligence service. (This falsehood, to the lasting shame of the newspaper of record, has never received a correction.) But overall Safire was a conservative with an open mind and a deep commitment to civil liberties. When his right side offended, he cut it off, as with his eloquent and ferocious opposition to the Patriot Act and his harsh treatment of George H.W. Bush for coddling Saddam Hussein.

Safire was unpredictable, not because he did not have fixed conservative beliefs but because—unless the subject was Israel—he allowed his facts to speak louder than his prejudices. He was, in short, everything contemporary conservatives are not. And though I knew him rather distantly, I like to think that he, too, would be ashamed of his colleagues' willingness to pander to a counter-intellectual like Kristol, much less the lunatic Beck. ■

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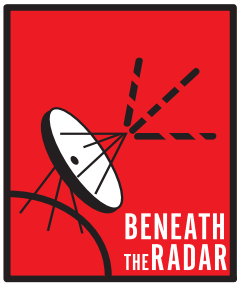
Gary Younge

Obama and the Decline of White America

During the Democratic primary, Chris Rock famously joked that George Bush had "fucked up so bad that it's hard for a white man to run for president." Some took him seriously. In August 2007 *Esquire* ran a cover of John Edwards with the question: "Can a white man still be elected president?" That the headline made any sense at all is a testament to the assumptions that prevail about who is entitled to the job. Of the seventeen presidential candidates in both main parties, fourteen were white men—32 percent of the population, 82 percent of the candidates, 100 percent of the past presidents. These are the kinds of odds that would make Kim Jong Il's election agent smile. Back then, with Obama trailing Clinton and both trailing Giuliani in the polls, the lash had not yet been wielded. But the backlash was already beginning.

Today it is in full swing. Right-wingers have turned up at Obama's events carrying guns. Facebook recently pulled a poll asking, "Should Obama be killed?" with choices of yes, no, maybe and "If he cuts my health care." This was clearly anticipated by Apollo Braun, a Manhattan store owner, whose "Who Killed Obama?" T-shirts were his most popular even before the election.



In between came gun-toting protesters at town hall meetings and official events. One of them carried a placard saying, "It is time to water the tree of liberty"—a reference to Thomas Jefferson's famous quote: "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants." It's the same quote Timothy McVeigh was wearing on his T-shirt when he was arrested for bombing the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people. From the time that Obama declared he was running, the primary concern among African-Americans was the same as the one expressed by Alma Powell as her husband, Colin Powell, contemplated running in 1996—assassination. Now it appears that those dark fears have become, in some quarters, white fantasies.

How real these threats are and how many people are behind them is anybody's guess. They are certainly part of a trend. In April a Homeland Security report, "Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment," concluded: "The economic downturn and the election of the first African American president present unique drivers for rightwing radicalization and recruitment." It also surmised that "rightwing extremist groups' frustration over a perceived lack of government action on illegal immigration has the potential to incite individuals or small groups toward violence." In any case, as 9/11 showed, you don't need that many people to send the world into turmoil.

What is truly stunning is the degree to which these marginal voices are explicitly sustained and implicitly condoned by the mainstream. Rarely condemned by Congressional Republicans, the rage has been galvanized by the sum of the slanders from the right-wing echo chamber.

After all, if Obama truly were a Kenyan-born Nazi and terrorist sympathizer who has usurped the presidency in order to set up concentration camps to house dissenters, then armed insurrection could be one logical response. The fact that he is none of those things suggests that there are far deeper forces at play. The right's ability to cast white people as victims is possible only because of the dramatic downward spiral of power and influence for white Americans at home and abroad that, paradoxically, accelerated under Bush.

Internationally, the United States' failed wars and flailing economy have left one of the world's most patriotic nations desperately trying to recalibrate its role in global affairs. "Owing to the relative decline of its economic and, to a lesser extent, military power, the US will no longer have the same flexibility in choosing among as many policy options," concluded the National Intelligence Council (which coordinates analysis from all US intelligence agencies) in November 2008. Meanwhile, neoliberal globalization has left white Americans feeling insecure in a world where they once called the shots. Among citizens of forty-six countries polled in 2007, Americans had the least positive view on foreign trade and one of the least positive on foreign companies. With unemployment edging toward double figures and a once stagnant median income now shrinking, white Americans do not experience their lot compared with nonwhite Americans as one of relative privilege, because compared with last year they are poorer.

Add to this the fact that numerically, white Americans will be a minority by 2045, and you have the basis for the panic that has been unleashed. Obama's election did not create these anxieties. (Were he more radical in his policies, he might actually alleviate some of them.) It has simply provided a focus for them and, conversely, proved that there is a vast constituency—particularly among the young—who do not share them.

The country these right-wingers keep saying they "want back" is a white one in which their exclusive entitlement to the exercise of power, locally and globally, goes unchallenged. The fact that *that* country isn't coming back is what makes their voices so shrill and their actions so extreme. Demographically, economically and geopolitically, white America is in decline. In the absence of any meaningful analysis of class, race or internationalism, white Americans are understandably disoriented. Never having considered the unearned privilege of being white and American, all they can see are things being taken away from them. Never having considered solidarity with blacks and Latinos, they see them not as potential allies but as perpetual enemies. Obama's election showed that these appeals to fear can be defeated; events since then indicate that they can still be destructive. ■

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TALKING WITH TEHRAN

by ROBERT DREYFUSS

On October 1 in Geneva, in a little more than seven hours, diplomats from the major world powers and Iran made a series of breakthroughs in the standoff over Iran's nuclear program, raising hopes for a peaceful resolution. Not only did top US diplomats sit down for the first time in decades for an extended official one-on-one with a high-level Iranian delegation; Iran agreed to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to inspect a disputed, previously covert facility intended for uranium enrichment. More important, Iran agreed to ship the bulk of its existing stock of fuel-grade, low-enriched uranium (LEU) to Russia and France, where it will be processed into fuel rods to be used for medical purposes at a reactor in Iran. In one stroke, Iran promised to divest itself of uranium that critics, including US and Israeli hawks, said was enough raw material to make a nuclear bomb if processed into highly enriched uranium (HEU).

It was a stunning turn of events. Those who said that negotiating with Iran was a fool's errand, including editorial writers at the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Weekly Standard* and *National Review*, looked like fools themselves. For President Obama, who'd made talking with Iran a central plank in his 2008 campaign and who'd reached out to Iran in speeches, in a videotaped New Year's message and in two letters to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, it was an important accomplishment. And it was a sign that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's defiant rhetoric—on the eve of the talks he had delivered a bombastic speech at the United Nations and spewed more vitriol by once again calling the Nazi mass murder of Jews a myth—might be designed to provide political cover at home for a grand bargain with the Great Satan.

Still, it's early in the talks—and as Ali Akbar Rezaie, director general for North and Central America at Iran's foreign ministry, told me in June, it isn't clear whether the new US administration is willing to make a fundamental break with the stance of George W. Bush. "President Obama didn't say that we have the right to enrich uranium. But he also didn't say that we do not have that right. It is not clear to us whether he omitted that point intentionally or not," Rezaie said, after analyzing Obama's June 4 speech in Cairo, in which the American president outlined his intention to rebuild US relations with the Muslim world. "We do not know what is in his mind," said Rezaie.

That's still the relevant question: what, exactly, is the US strategy? During the Bush era, Washington insisted that Tehran would not be allowed to operate a uranium enrichment program, even one dedicated to peaceful purposes. In June, in a statement seen in Iran as a hopeful sign that US policy was changing, Senator John Kerry, chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, told the *Financial Times*, "The Bush administration's [insistence on] no enrichment was ridiculous because Iran is a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty [NPT]. They have a right to peaceful use of nuclear power and to enrichment in that purpose."

If the United States insists that Iran dismantle its enrichment program, the newly opened talks are virtually certain to fail. That, in turn, would leave the administration facing an unpalatable choice between "crippling sanctions," in the words of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and military confrontation. On the other hand, if Obama acknowledges Iran's right to enrich uranium for peaceful nuclear energy in exchange for stringent international supervision and a rigorous IAEA inspection regime, an agreement is possible.

To be sure, even if the new administration is willing to allow Iran to continue enrichment, talks are likely to be very difficult, long and complicated, and hardliners in both the United States and Iran can be expected to do their utmost to prevent a rapprochement. In the wake of the brutal postelection crackdown by Iranian security forces against Ahmadinejad's reformist, centrist and pragmatist opposition, who have mobilized millions of protesters to challenge what was widely seen as a fraudulent vote, the militant commanders of the ascendant Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)—and perhaps Ahmadinejad himself—may prefer defiance and confrontation with the West, rather than accommodation, as a means of shoring up domestic support. And in the United States, hawks, neoconservatives

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and supporters of the Israeli far right, including lobbyists from AIPAC—the American Israel Public Affairs Committee—have characterized the talks as a Munich-like appeasement policy, and are now trumpeting an unreleased, and disputed, IAEA report alleging that Iran is capable of making a bomb and has carried out extensive research and testing of bomb-delivery vehicles. These groups are out in full force demanding that Obama set a short deadline for Iran to capitulate before moving to confrontation, a cutoff of Iran's gasoline and diesel fuel imports, and a policy of regime change, with all-out war on their list of options.

Among the opponents of sanctions are Russia, which has ever closer economic ties with Iran, and China, which buys one-seventh of its crude energy needs from Iran and, in return, is supplying Iran with an increasing share of its gasoline imports. Also against sanctions are leaders of the very opposition movement in Iran that proponents of sanctions in the United States say they want to help. "Sanctions would not affect the government but would impose many hardships upon the people, who suffer enough as a result of the calamity of their insane rulers," said Mir-Hossein Moussavi, who ran against Ahmadinejad in June.

Before the talks began, Washington and Tehran had staked out positions that seemed to rule out compromise. Said Ahmadinejad, "If you are talking about the enrichment of uranium for peaceful purposes, this will never be closed down here in Iran." In a dramatic statement after he announced the discovery of Iran's covert enrichment facility, Obama said, "Iran is on notice that when we meet with them on October 1 they are going to have to come clean and they will have to make a choice [to give up their program or] continue down a path that is going to lead to confrontation."

But experts say most of Obama's negotiating team understand that the United States cannot insist on zero-enrichment. Asked before the talks whether US negotiators realize that zero-enrichment is not an option, Thomas Pickering, a former US diplomat who's taken part in a series of unofficial discussions with senior Iranian officials, said, "Sure they do. We've talked to them." Pickering and other experts have proposed a conciliatory plan that allows Iran to manage a uranium enrichment program on its soil. Obama, he says, may be reluctant to tip his hand at the start of negotiations, but he thinks Obama's team gets it. "There are folks inside the administration who have looked at our idea," he said.

But getting the idea is half the battle. The other half is having the patience for what is expected to be a bumpy road ahead. Above all, according to analysts such as Trita Parsi, president of the National Iranian American Council, Obama will have to resist those clamoring for a quick deadline for the talks and sanctions by the end of 2009. Echoing Pickering, Parsi says, "The administration has concluded privately that they are not going to get zero-enrichment." If Obama wants to convince Iran to agree to robust oversight of its program, he'll have to resist advisers who argue that Iran's nuclear effort is a ticking time bomb.

Robert Dreyfuss is a Nation *contributing editor.*

Bolstering the notion that Washington has plenty of time to work out a deal, the US intelligence community says Iran is years away from being able to build a nuclear weapon. In November 2007 a National Intelligence Estimate concluded that Iran "halted its nuclear weapons program" in 2003 and added that by mid-2007, it had not restarted it. Earlier this year Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair released an estimate by the State Department's intelligence bureau concluding that it is "unlikely that Iran will have the technical ability to produce [bomb-quality] HEU before 2013." And according to *Newsweek*, this fall US intelligence agencies told the White House that Iran "has not resumed nuclear-weapons development work." Though agencies in Israel and Germany have reportedly concluded that Iran is somewhat closer to development of a bomb, Meir Dagan, the director of Israel's Mossad, admitted that even if Iran faced no technical difficulties, it probably would not be able to develop and deploy a weapon until 2014, according to the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*.

The September revelation of Iran's secret enrichment facility sparked a flurry of accusations that Tehran is considering a covert weapons program; perhaps the site—in a hardened bunker on land controlled by the IRGC—is a sign of exactly that. Obama was apparently convinced, saying, "The size and type of the facility is inconsistent with that of a peaceful facility." But by all accounts, it is designed to house perhaps 3,000 centrifuges for uranium enrichment, a capability that Iran already has, and it is not a weapons plant. In addition, it is not yet operational and no uranium has been introduced into it. Iran's decision to allow inspectors to visit the site is a sign that it may be willing to accept more stringent IAEA oversight—especially if Tehran concludes that it risks losing the support it gets from key allies and trading partners like Russia and China.

Hardliners in both the United States and Iran can be expected to do their utmost to prevent a rapprochement.

The fact is, Iran possesses only a limited quantity of low-enriched uranium, which is produced by the 8,000 or so centrifuges at its Natanz plant. To build a bomb, Iran would have to further enrich its LEU to bomb-grade HEU, a technically complex task that would require it to divert uranium into a weapons program, somehow evading the gaze of IAEA inspectors. It also needs the know-how to build an explosive device and develop a warhead, as well as the missiles or other vehicles that can carry it. Each of these steps is difficult, leading most observers to conclude that Iran is at least several years away from a military nuclear capability—assuming it wants one.

And there's the rub. Just as Rezaie can't read Obama's mind, the United States doesn't know the intentions of the Iranians. There's little doubt, except among the terminally naïve and a coterie of apologists for Iran, that some in Iran's national security apparatus are determined to make Iran into a nuclear-armed power. For years, Iran has been surrounded

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by countries with nuclear arsenals, including Israel, Pakistan, India and Russia, along with a heavy US presence in the region and, until recently, Iraq, a hostile neighbor that aspired to have the bomb. But it isn't clear whether Khamenei, Ahmadinejad and the IRGC view Iran's nuclear program as the path toward the bomb, as a bargaining chip to trade for other goals that Iran wants to achieve or simply as its legitimate right as a signatory to the NPT. If Iran really wants a bomb—or, alternately, "breakout capability," which would enable it to build one in short order—it's likely to get it. None of the sanctions the United States and its allies can muster have the power to compel Iran to change course. Russia and China are almost certain to oppose draconian sanctions, and in three rounds of sanctions so far, the UN Security Council has imposed only limited and highly targeted ones. And military action, either by the United States or Israel, won't do more than delay Iran's program. As Defense Secretary Robert Gates acknowledged in late September: "The reality is, there is no military option that does anything more than buy time.… And the only way you end up not having a nuclear-capable Iran is for the Iranian government to decide that their security is diminished by having those weapons, as opposed to strengthened." So if the talks don't succeed, Washington is going to have to think about containing and deterring a nuclear Iran.

If Obama offers a fair deal, it will undercut Ahmadinejad's bluster and help create space for Iran's domestic opposition.

If Obama's diplomats offer a proposal that acknowledges Iran's enrichment rights, they would present Iran with a critical choice. If Tehran refuses such a deal, it will be universally accepted around the world—including by Iran's anti-Ahmadinejad opposition—that Iran does indeed see its enrichment program as a steppingstone to the bomb. If Iran accepts it (after the requisite amount of huffing and puffing), not only will it get the current economic sanctions lifted but probably it will get access to a wide range of Western nuclear technology. According to numerous interviews with Iranian analysts and politicians in Tehran in June, that is the preferred outcome for many Iranian conservatives as well as leaders of the reformist-centrist coalition and the business class.

There is, indeed, a broad constituency in Iran's establishment for a deal. According to Nasser Hadian, a professor at Tehran University who helped assemble a group of Khamenei's advisers to analyze Obama's Cairo speech, Khamenei "does not really want the bomb." Instead, Hadian says, the Leader sees the program as something to trade. "It is a bargaining chip, and if so, why not make a deal?" He said that if an accord is reached, Iran would probably voluntarily reduce the number of its centrifuges from 8,000 to fewer than 1,000 and place them under a vigorous international inspection system. Hadian added that several of Ahmadinejad's top aides, such as Mojtaba Samareh-Hashemi, his chief adviser, and Hamid Mowlana, have taken part in off-the-record discussions with former US officials like Pickering and William Perry, Bill Clinton's defense secretary and a key Obama adviser. Such talks have taken place over seven years under the umbrella of the United Nations Association of the USA and the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs.

Critics often argue that Iran, awash in oil and natural gas, doesn't need nuclear energy. But that overlooks the fact that Iran earns nearly all its foreign exchange from exporting oil and gas. If it can develop nuclear energy for domestic electricity needs, that will allow it to export more oil and gas and thus boost earnings. That's the case made by Gholamhossein Karbaschi, a former mayor of Tehran and a leading reformist, who was a top aide to presidential candidate Mehdi Karroubi in the June election. The current enrichment program, Karbaschi told me in an interview in Tehran, is far less important than Iran's access to up-to-date technology, even if that technology has to come from the West. The Bushehr plant, he said, is rooted in older-generation Russian-based technology, while Iran's plan is to construct a series of at least eight to ten ultramodern power plants with a total capacity of 25,000 megawatts by the year 2025.

Between now and then, Iran will have little or no need for low-enriched uranium for power plants, so an arrangement to cut back its uranium processing would be useful for both sides in the negotiations. "This should be the main goal," Karbaschi told me. "Our enrichment program should be focused on that long-range goal." In other words, he suggested, there is no need for an intensive program to produce LEU until there is a demand for it in a system of power plants.

Mohammed Atrianfar, a top adviser to former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and a member of Rafsanjani's Executives of Construction Party, who was arrested in the wake of the June election crisis, told me: "There is an agreement between reformists and fundamentalists about nuclear energy. Should we have the right to utilize nuclear power? Everyone accepts this right. We believe that we can have [civilian] nuclear power when the world believes us and accepts us into their club. Unfortunately, Ahmadinejad's policies are creating tension and problems with the rest of the world."

Many analysts believe it is exactly that tension that strengthens Ahmadinejad's position at home. When US-Iran tensions heat up, and when Israel threatens to bomb Iran, Iran's hardliners use that as an excuse for intensified repression against the opposition. If Obama offers a fair deal in the context of the Geneva talks, it will undercut Ahmadinejad's bluster and help create space for the opposition to regain the momentum it had going into the June 12 election.

Many influential Iranians have been impressed by Obama's outreach to Iran, but they insist that it is critical for the United States to do something concrete to convince Tehran of Obama's sincerity. One who makes that argument is Sadegh Kharazi, a former ambassador to France, who is close to Khamenei and whose uncle, Kamal Kharazi, is a former foreign minister who leads a well-connected think tank in Tehran. In 2003 Sadegh Kharazi was a key player in the "grand bargain" offer to resolve

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Dr. Timothy Spurgin is the Bonnie Glidden Buchanan Professor of English Literature and Associate Professor of English at Lawrence University. He received his M.A. and Ph.D. in English Literature from the University of Virginia. Professor Spurgin is the recipient of Lawrence University's Outstanding Young Teacher Award and the Freshman Studies Teaching Prize.

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outstanding differences between the United States and Iran. "We do not have any problem with international supervision of our nuclear program," says Kharazi. "But we need a gesture from the United States. If Obama makes such a gesture, then all doors will open."

Obama will be making a mistake if he calibrates his negotiating strategy to appeal to this or that faction of Iran's ruling elite. "Frankly, we don't know enough about how Iran works to adopt that kind of approach," says Chas Freeman, a former US ambassador to Saudi Arabia. But by making a proposal for a fair deal allowing Iranian enrichment, Obama can test the Iranian political system. John Limbert, a former US diplomat and one of those held hostage during Iran's 1979–81 seizure of the US Embassy, says the priority for the Tehran regime is political survival, and its response to offers from the West will revolve around the question, "Does engagement with the United States help my survival in power or does it open the floodgates to change that could sweep me out of power?" Across a broad spectrum in Iran, there is a consensus in favor of better relations with the West. What's not clear is whether Iran's leaders are ready to play to that constituency.

James Dobbins, a veteran US diplomat and negotiator who is now a director at the RAND Corporation, says, "It's hard to know where the Iranians will take this. Perhaps the Iranians themselves don't know." But, he adds, "negotiations almost never end with either side achieving their objective. And they usually end with both sides being able to claim that they've achieved their objectives." ■

Memo to Investigators: Dig Deep

If Congress hopes to enact lasting financial reform, it must first identify the roots of the crisis.

by WILLIAM GREIDER

When the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission opened for business on September 17, it was a nonevent for the media. Leading newspapers brushed aside chairman Phil Angelides, the former California state treasurer, and his declaration of purpose—"uncovering the facts and providing an unbiased historical accounting of what brought our financial system and our economy to its knees." As Angelides put it, "The fuses for that cataclysm were undoubtedly lit years before. It is our job to diligently and doggedly follow those fuses to their origins."

JANNA BROWER

The press has moved on. Financial crisis was last year's story. Didn't the Treasury and Federal Reserve announce they have already turned things around? Hasn't the president proposed a bunch of complicated reforms (boring!) for Congress to enact? Yes, but that is the problem. How can Washington reform the financial system when we still don't know what happened?

We may know the broad outlines, but the landscape remains littered with unanswered questions and informed suspicions about who did what to produce the breakdown. The relevant facts are still buried in the files of Wall Street firms and the regulatory agencies that utterly failed as watchdogs. The Angelides commission has the subpoena power to dig out secrets—from e-mails and private memos, and through testimony under oath—that can disclose political deal-making and ruinous financial strategies. Given the rush of events, the commission may be the public's last, best chance to get at the truth of the matter.

Congress created the ten-member commission (six Democrats, four Republicans) to identify the root causes of the financial crisis. It listed more than twenty areas for inquiry, from the collapse of individual institutions to the complex financial instruments now known as toxic assets. It is a gigantic task fraught with explosive implications for government and finance.

The commission has chosen an executive director with an impressive twenty-five-year history of uncovering corporate fraud and malfeasance. Thomas Greene, chief assistant attorney general from California endorsed as a nonpartisan straight shooter by the Republican and Democratic attorneys general he served, has led complex investigations into anti-trust, price-fixing and deceptive accounting gimmicks on cases involving big names like Enron, Microsoft and El Paso Natural Gas. The financial crisis has all those elements and more.

"If we do this right," Angelides said, "our work can serve as an antidote—much as the Pecora hearings did in the 1930s—to the kinds of financial market practices that none of us would want to see be repeated ever again."

In the New Deal years, the Congressional investigation led by Ferdinand Pecora helped build the case for landmark regulatory reforms—legislation establishing the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Glass-Steagall Act, which separated commercial banks from risk-taking investment banks. Like Pecora, Angelides does not intend to propose policy solutions but simply to discover what really happened.

"I'm very serious on this point," Angelides told me in an informal conversation. "If we stick to the hard facts, we might turn up some perpetrators, but our job is to accomplish something more than that. If we pursue all the facts, we can give the American people a clear understanding of what occurred during the last twenty years or so. What forces lit the fire that led to this explosion? What exactly happened with those financial firms that failed? What happened in regulation or at the Federal Reserve?

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What happened in the economy to fuel the fire? Where were the firefighters? Who was asleep? Who was awake? Who sounded the alarm and was ignored? It could be a very disturbing story."

Washington cynics have low expectations for Angelides. Too many important people just want the whole thing to go away. The Obama administration had hoped to pass its reform package quickly and then move on. But the White House plan, which rearranges the boxes among regulatory agencies and puts the Fed in charge, is stalled by rising skepticism in Congress and doubts expressed by establishment figures like former Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker, who is particularly wary of making the "too big to fail" doctrine into a permanent assumption. In a statement to the House Banking and Financial Services Committee on September 24, Volcker asked, "Will not the pattern of protection for the largest banks and their holding companies tend to encourage greater risk-taking, including active participation in volatile capital markets, especially when compensation practices so greatly reward short-term success?" Volcker wants commercial banks restored to their narrower purpose—taking deposits and lending to borrowers, instead of playing in high-risk financial markets. He does not say so directly, but that would restore some protections enacted seventy years ago by Glass-Steagall and repealed by the Clinton administration.

Even if Congress manages to act this fall, the debate will not end. Obama's plan does not begin to get at the rot in the financial system. Wall Street's most notorious practices continue to flourish, and if unemployment rates keep rising through 2010, the public will not set aside its anger. The Angelides investigators could put the story back on the front page.

The good news is, there are not one but two major investigations exploring this ground. The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, chaired by Edolphus Towns of Brooklyn, New York, broke a hoary taboo this summer—unprecedented in modern times—by issuing two subpoenas to the Federal Reserve, demanding e-mails and other documents on its role in Bank of America's subsidized takeover of Merrill Lynch. The Fed tried to duck and dodge, but given its tarnished reputation, it complied rather than provoke a fight it was bound to lose.

Towns used the evidence from private communications to grill officials with provocative questions. Did Fed chairman Ben Bernanke bully BofA into doing a bad deal? Did BofA CEO Ken Lewis mislead his shareholders on the losses and the outrageous midnight bonuses the bank paid to Merrill Lynch executives? After the hearings, Towns sent a tart letter to Lewis, mocking his double talk and demanding more documents. On September 30 Lewis threw in the towel and announced his retirement. (BofA remains in the cross hairs.)

Bite by bite, Towns is trying to keep alive the aggressive style he inherited from former Oversight Committee chair Henry Waxman. Next he is going after Moody's and other credit-rating agencies that issued triple-A ratings for rotten mortgage securities. The tough-guy approach can produce results, as the example of BofA shows, but also can carry political risks. Right-wing Republicans have blasted back at Towns, accusing him of getting sweetheart mortgages from Countrywide Financial (now owned by BofA). "Congressman Towns did not receive, nor did he seek, any special mortgage benefits," his office responded.

Towns has one crucial advantage over Angelides—the power to issue subpoenas single-handedly. Angelides is required by law to get approval from at least one of the commission Republicans, who are led by former California Congressman Bill Thomas, a brainy and formidable figure. This rule means GOP members (or Democrats, for that matter) could stall or stymie the investigation. If that occurs, Angelides should go public and call them on their tactics.

"We have started off on the right footing," Angelides insists. "Bill Thomas and I are working together. I have reason to believe both Republicans and Democrats on the commission want to and should have an interest in getting to the truth." The chairman, in any case, promises to "pull no punches." Meanwhile, he could develop useful relationships with Towns and with aggressive state attorneys general like Andrew Cuomo of New York, who also targeted Lewis, and Jerry Brown of California. There is plenty of scandal to go around.

Digging deep can begin with uncovering shocking revelations about the bailouts. That would redirect the reform debate toward more fundamental issues. Here are some promising targets for investigators:

Collusion in High Places. Some Wall Street players suspect that certain bailouts engineered by the Treasury and the Federal Reserve (including Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, former head of the New York Fed) were motivated by a logic never revealed to the public. The suspicion goes like this: the strange and costly rescue of AIG, an insurance company facing bankruptcy, was really intended to save Goldman Sachs, the premier investment house. If AIG went down, it would threaten Goldman and other big holders of AIG's collapsing derivative contracts. Goldman CEO Lloyd Blankfein participated in the pre-bailout discussions, an oddity revealed by Gretchen Morgenson of the *New York Times*. Afterward, Goldman got paid off in full with the public's money—$12.9 billion to erase its exposure.

Something similar is suspected about the Bear Stearns bailout. The intention may have been to protect JPMorgan Chase, the commercial bank with the largest holdings of vulnerable derivatives. Morgan Chase demanded and got full federal financing for any losses it might suffer by taking over Bear Stearns (in effect, the bank was reimbursed for its own rescue). Did Washington decline to rescue Lehman Brothers because the firm was not sponsored by an important club member that felt threatened by Lehman's demise?

Answering these questions can illuminate the overbearing influence on government exercised by the two dozen or so firms at the pinnacle of financial power. Both the Bush and Obama administrations were committed to saving the big boys first, demanding little or nothing in return. The favoritism raises other unexplored questions. Why, for instance, hasn't the Treasury bought up rotten assets from the troubled banks after demanding Congress put up $700 billion for that purpose? One possibility is that officials may have devised a back-door way to clean up bank balance sheets without provoking more anger in Congress. It appears that toxic assets are gradually being offloaded through three discreet channels the government now con-

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trols—AIG, Fannie Mae and the Federal Reserve. Look, no hands. If people can't see it happening, they can't get mad.

Unprosecuted Crimes. Beyond Ponzi schemes and deceitful mortgage lending, a far larger crime may lurk at the center of the crisis—wholesale securities fraud. "Risk models" reassured unwitting investors who bought millions of bundled mortgage securities and derivatives like credit-default swaps. But as Christopher Whalen of Institutional Risk Analytics has testified, many of the models lacked real-life markets where they could be tested and verified. "Clearly, we have now many examples where a model or the pretense of a model was used as a vehicle for creating risk and hiding it," Whalen said. "More important, however, is the role of financial models for creating opportunities for deliberate acts of securities fraud." That's what investigators can examine. What did the Wall Street firms know about the reliability of these models when they sold the securities? And what did they tell the buyers?

Who Let the Dogs Out? The question of political blame is explosive but not partisan. Both parties collaborated in stripping away the safeguards against greed and recklessness, authorizing the culture of permissiveness that led to ruin. The invitation to irresponsibility originated on the right with the naïve ideology of Milton Friedman. Republicans were the most zealous advocates for gutting New Deal regulations that had produced financial stability for three generations, but Democrats started the game when they repealed the federal law against usury and the legal ceilings on interest rates in 1980 (before Ronald Reagan came to Washington).

Both parties championed the creation of all-purpose megabanks with the 1999 repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act. The Federal Reserve permitted Citibank to ignore the law even before it was repealed. Indeed, nearly every offense attributed to reckless bankers was authorized by Congress and presidents—over-borrowing against bank capital, hiding debt with accounting tricks, evading regulatory laws by interacting with hedge funds and other nonbanks. The political culprits have not shown much remorse or offered apologies. That's what makes the prospective investigations so important.

The Failure of the Fed. The Federal Reserve's dereliction as the regulator of the banking system is by now widely understood. But far more grave was the central bank's failure to conduct responsible monetary policy. Driven by Friedmanite ideology, Fed governors tipped the normal balance in favor of capital over labor, the financial sector over the productive economy. The result was numerous disorders, including the triumph of the financiers and swelling income inequality. Monetary policy became unreliable as "bubbles" inflated, followed by recession. Instead of moderating, Fed policy swung between extremes and ultimately destabilized the entire economy.

One reason for the Fed's failure is that deregulation undermined the central bank's ability to manage the supply of credit. As rules and prudential limits were abandoned or unenforced, the Fed's policy mechanisms were steadily weakened, and it lost control of its core function—countering the real economy's excesses both on the upside and the downside. Debt exploded, accumulating far faster than economic growth. Instead of candidly addressing the central bank's weakness, though, Alan Greenspan led cheers for the new order—right up to the day it collapsed. If nothing significant is changed about monetary policy, more bubbles and crashes will surely follow.

Dysfunctional Democracy. Surely the political system itself is a root cause of the financial crisis. The swollen influence of financial interests pushed Congress and presidents to repeal regulation and look the other way as reckless excesses developed. Efforts to restore a more reliable representative democracy can start with Congress. The power of money could be curbed by new rules prohibiting members of key committees from accepting contributions from the sectors they oversee. Regulatory agencies, likewise, need internal designs to protect them from capture by the industries they regulate.

The Federal Reserve, having failed in its obligations so profoundly, should be reconstituted as an accountable federal agency, shorn of the excessive secrecy and insider privileges accorded to bankers. The Constitution gives Congress, not the executive branch, the responsibility for managing money and credit. Congress must reassert this responsibility and learn how to provide adequate oversight and policy critique. [See "Dismantling the Temple," Aug. 3/10.]

Reforming the financial system, in other words, can be the prelude to reviving representative democracy.

Origins of the Debtor Nation. Congress instructed the Angelides commission to examine lopsided financial flows in the global economy and the global imbalance of savings. How did China wind up with a mountain of surplus capital while the US economy has had to borrow more heavily from abroad each year just to stay afloat? One obvious explanation is the unbalanced trading system in which the United States has been steadily weakened by serving as "buyer of last resort" for other nations' exports. During the past two decades, the United States piled up something like $15 trillion in debt from trade deficits, as value-added production and jobs were relocated overseas. Simply put, we import a lot more than we export, goods we buy from abroad that used to be manufactured in the United States.

Political debate usually avoids the links between negative US trade and our weakened condition as a debtor nation, but the consequences are visible through several channels. The outmigration of production and jobs drives the long-running stagnation of industrial wages, roughly stuck at the same level as in 1973. The annual trade deficits, recently as high as 6 percent of GDP, subtract directly from domestic economic growth. These ill effects and others have created a permanent shortfall in aggregate demand—not enough consumers with the money to buy the stuff they need or want. So households rely on borrowing to pay the bills and hang on to their faltering living standards.

The financial crisis crisply marks an end to that era of false prosperity. The illusion of living well on borrowed money cannot be revived by repairing the banking system. The restoration of prosperity will require wrenching economic changes, including a very different US approach to the global trading system. No one expects the commission to solve the trade problem, of course. But the investigation can restart the debate on more honest terms. Asking deeper questions about the true sources of the calamity is a first step toward developing authentic answers to the nation's predicament. ■

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Beyond Rescue

The campaign against forced prostitution works when it addresses the needs of victims.

by NOY THRUPKAEW

This is the second installment of a two-part series. The first part, "The Crusade Against Sex Trafficking," was published in the October 5 issue. —The Editors

JANNA BROWER

Drifting down Junquera Street after nightfall with your car doors unlocked is an unwise proposition. Pimps dart out from street corners and pound on the windows of passing cars—sometimes they are so eager to provide the services of their "girls" that they pry open car doors to make a more direct appeal. Visitors who make it out of the car unscathed face another gantlet at the main entrance of Kamagayan, one of the main red-light districts in Cebu City, the Philippines. Descend past the jostling throng and the howling of the karaoke bars, and the pathway wends toward brothels and alleyways strung with dim red lights, where customers come to find the underage prostitutes that Kamagayan is notorious for providing—along with drugs and gambling opportunities. Out of plain sight, in an alleyway, is a cluster of girls with puppyish, knobby knees. Their garish makeup stands out like neon on their young faces, adding to Kamagayan's air of desperate pageantry.

Like Cambodia and Thailand, the Philippines suffers from a significant problem with child sex exploitation. But the Philippines provides more fertile ground for US work on anti-trafficking—the majority-Catholic country is more in ideological harmony with the abolitionist attitudes that hold sway in Washington. As Jean Enriquez, executive director of the Coalition Against the Trafficking in Women-Asia Pacific, asserted, "All prostitution is forced rape"—an idea that has great ideological and political resonance in the Philippines. Enriquez's group is one of the main anti-trafficking organizers in the Philippines and a beneficiary of US government funds on the issue; the organization also helped draft the Philippines' anti-trafficking legislation.

In the Philippines the International Justice Mission found a hospitable home for its work. IJM draws on the services of evangelical lawyers, law-enforcement officers and social workers, who enlist local counterparts and police to combat human rights abuses in the developing world. In the Philippines, as in India, Cambodia and, in the past, Thailand, IJM conducts "brothel raids"—its most controversial and best-known work—by providing evidence of trafficking to local police, collaborating on "interventions" to remove victims from the establishments and working to ensure the arrest and prosecution of their abusers.

For IJM, the lack of highly vocal sex-worker organizations or HIV NGOs—the traditional critics of IJM's work—has meant a smoother reception for the group's work in the Philippines. The organization has also been able to avoid the considerable friction that has resulted in other countries from the deportation of women netted in raids—most of the trafficking that occurs within the Philippines concerns domestic movement. And the organization has found willing government partners and a network of shelters run by Christian organizations. One aftercare shelter in partnership with IJM, Happy Horizons, offers "daily, Bible-based counseling to restore the self-esteem and confidence that comes with the realization that one is a precious, beloved child of God.... When the restoration process is completed, children rescued from the sex trade in Cebu City will be able to lead happy, productive Christian lives."

IJM has had some notable successes in the Philippines—where it has a presence in Manila, Cebu and its new State Department–funded office in Samar—particularly in the realm of prosecutions. One case involved a shyly smiling young woman who identified herself as Cris, in tribute to the social worker who had counseled her. Cris and her friends were deceived by one of the friends' relatives. Promised jobs as waitresses, they had traveled with her to Batangas, where they were apprehended en route by police trained by the Visayan Forum, an organization that works on domestic labor abuses and trafficking prevention. IJM won the case against Cris's trafficker in 2008.

IJM's office in Cebu expanded upon the organization's previous work—perhaps partially because of input from its influential funder. Supported by a $5 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Project Lantern, based in the Cebu office, was designed to create a replicable model of counter-trafficking work. An additional benefit, IJM claimed, would be a reduction in HIV infection rates—rescue would remove trafficking victims from potential infection, and successful prosecution of traffickers would reduce overall numbers of potential victims. But questions abound about the counter-trafficking approach embodied by Project Lantern and whether it is, in fact, a model that ought to be replicated.

According to the grantmaker who signed off on the Gates funding, Project Lantern was an attempt to create harmony between IJM's criminal-justice approach and one that was more centered on community development and women's empowerment. "We weren't necessarily encouraging [IJM] to do anything but what their model

Noy Thrupkaew is a freelance writer based in New York City. Research support for this article was provided by the Investigative Fund at The Nation Institute.

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does," says Helene Gayle, former director of the Gates HIV, TB and Reproductive Health program and current president/CEO of Care USA. "But we wanted to see…is there a way of pulling them into the family?"

In Project Lantern, IJM has refined its techniques, but problems with police corruption and insufficient economic alternatives to prostitution persist—problems that illustrate the ways that IJM's model may be insufficient to overcome systemic issues, including spotty "aftercare" infrastructure. IJM's raids overwhelmed the shelter and social-services capacity of Cebu, for example. In addition, a number of the women and girls who could be housed at the government centers would stage risky escapes, illustrating the failure of post-raid services to ameliorate immediate economic and familial pressures and address the ways rescue could feel like a form of detention, according to human rights critics. Less drastic and more family-focused interventions, critics argued, would be a more effective way to help minors out of the commercial sex industry.

Raids instigated by the US evangelical group IJM overwhelmed the shelter and social services capacity of Cebu City, the Philippines.

For Project Lantern, IJM made a number of notable improvements, conducting the organization's first official baseline study to assess pre-existing levels of trafficking. It has also been working to integrate trafficking victims' families and economic needs into aftercare. The organization reached out to social-service groups like the Cebu City Health Department, which conducts HIV-screening for sex workers, and even set up a meeting with an association of brothel owners in order to explain the anti-trafficking law to them. And it also seems to be conducting more tightly focused stings—in which pimps or traffickers bring minors to hotel rooms or other off-site locations—rather than conducting large, wholesale raids.

"It's good to hear about these improvements," said Françoise Girard, director of the Open Society Institute's Public Health Program. Girard had met with IJM's president, Gary Haugen, in 2007 to discuss her concerns about the group's counter-trafficking work. "But really, shouldn't they have been doing all these things before? They didn't have baseline information [about] whether their actions had any effect on numbers of trafficked women after doing this work for all these years?"

"There's real tension in their model," she continued. "Are we here to rescue individual girls, or test the theory about how the criminal justice system could create a disincentive for trafficking? When I pressed them about which to choose, they went with individual girls. There's always a reason to raid in that case—and we know what kinds of problems with deportation, detention and brutality the raids can bring."

IJM has also struggled with state corruption, including bribes, extortion and sexual coercion or complicity on the part of the police. The group won a landmark case this past September against a police officer for trafficking minors into the sex industry—the first conviction of a public officer for this crime in the Philippines. But the problems remain deeply entrenched. In 2006, before the advent of Project Lantern, the Cebu City government passed an ordinance that police were not allowed to have sexual intercourse with suspected trafficking victims when performing stings. "That was very bad," said police inspector Enrique Lacerna. "One police officer was caught on CCTV during a raid. Yes, having sex with the trafficking victim during the sting."

Despite the ordinance, another policeman confirmed that law enforcement agents still insisted on the performance of sexual services when conducting anti-trafficking raids. Nervous sweat beading his brow, he also asserted that a number of men in his unit received 10,000 pesos per month for protecting brothels and tipping off owners in the case of an impending raid. Considering that the starting monthly salary of a police officer was 9,500 pesos, it was no small haul. Fearing reprisals from other police officers, he spoke on condition of anonymity, as did a government official who indicated that "there is a concern among partners in the region about the involvement of police in trafficking, and a concern that they may use the anti-trafficking campaign to exert pressure on brothel owners for their personal benefit." The official declined to speak about specific incidents.

As in Cambodia and Thailand, some IJM rescuees did not want to stay rescued. At IJM's site in Cebu, young women and girls removed an air conditioner and jumped from the second floor of HerSpace, a processing center that IJM built, some incurring injuries. Others walked out of another center, which was undergoing construction to increase security. And still another group attempted to burn down a facility—luckily, no one was injured.

In the Philippines, I made numerous attempts to find and speak with "the one" rescued in an IJM intervention, as I had in Thailand and in Cambodia. The closest I came in any of the countries was a 19-year-old woman who had returned to prostitution after being caught in a 2008 IJM-initiated raid and escaping from Cebu's Department of Social Welfare and Development processing center. But, traumatized by the raid-and-rescue experience, she refused to speak to me in person, and only asked if I was from an NGO like IJM.

"She says she will never talk to anyone from an NGO ever again," my translator relayed, "if that is what they do."

The director of Cebu's Department of Social Welfare and Development, Teodulo Romo, admits, "We were not ready when we stepped up the rescue operations.… Aftercare was the weakest link." Hence, the escapes. HerSpace, he noted, is "surrounded by a high fence and barbed wire to prevent people from the outside coming in." After the air conditioner escape, "We had to reinforce the perimeter, and so far there have been no more escapes since that happened in May." IJM helped to improve security at another facility, called The Haven, as well, by building higher walls and fences—ostensibly meant to pro-

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tect the women and girls but perhaps even more effective at making sure they couldn't leave the shelters.

One NGO, called Bidlisiw, takes a drastically different approach to its counter-trafficking work. Huddled in the shadow of a bridge overpass, the Bidlisiw building houses a classroom with a green chalkboard and rough chairs, and a staff office with wooden desks crowded in rows, as in a schoolhouse. The floor of the office runs down at a slant, with the effect of making one feel a bit drunk when traversing the room. Bidlisiw was once funded by USAID but saw its funding dry up when that organization began to shift from its safer-sex approach to a more abstinence-based policy in 2002 and 2003. European funders then stepped in to support the organization's work.

Over the course of twenty years Bidlisiw has developed a rigorously holistic program for children in the commercial sex industry. It reaches out on all fronts—offering the families and children comprehensive psychosocial counseling, livelihood initiatives, microloans and tutoring and vocational training. It also educates clients on the anti-trafficking law and HIV prevention.

Last year 140 families graduated from the program—preliminary indicators show that 30 percent of the children have left prostitution. "That's a lot for us. If we can't stop them, at least they can help themselves a little bit more with our support," says executive director Lolita Ganapin.

Under Philippine law, every one of Bidlisiw's clients would be considered a trafficking victim—all of them are underage children in the sex industry. Ganapin finds an organization like IJM useful for the most extreme cases—"when we know the child is in clear bondage or is being abused or severely taken advantage of by pimps"—and has also discreetly reported such cases to the police. However, she doesn't advocate for wholesale rescue operations to remove the majority of her organization's clients from the sex industry. Cebu province doesn't have adequate facilities for all of them, she said, and "after [the children are] released, they will go back. It's better…to proceed to a more planned-out intervention that has a longer impact."

A few women involved in Bidlisiw outreach programs filter through the office—20-year-old Maricel, stout, smiling, in a red shirt; Ronalin, 24, who speaks excellent English and worked for the organization as a peer educator; and Grace. Immensely pregnant, Grace has huge sloe eyes and a downturned mouth—she is snacking on a stick of grilled meat and slurping from a glass Pepsi bottle. Grace and Ronalin both started working the bars when they were teenagers—Ronalin was deceived by a friend; Grace was not. Maricel, however, claims she just started sex work two months ago, when her mother suggested she work the streets so they'd have enough money for rice. Her military boyfriend is her "manager" and that of Grace as well, who works in a friend's house along with five other girls.

As we continue talking, however, some of the stories begin to unravel. At first Maricel says she was caught in a police sweep just this year, as was Grace, who was then released because she was pregnant. Have they been caught in raids before? Maricel shakes her head vaguely. Grace snorts and says, "Stop lying! She was captured in a raid much earlier—when she was 12. She was lying to you before, you know. She's one of the runaways who escaped from a shelter."

Maricel speaks with her gaze in her lap. "It's true. I didn't want you to think badly of me. I've been working the streets a long time. But I'm good, you know. I always use condoms."

Another snort. "Liar! You don't. I know you want to get pregnant," says Grace. "You don't even go for the health check-ups at the government clinic."

A hullabaloo breaks out. After five or so minutes of frantic gesticulating and rapid-fire Cebuano, Maricel has promised to talk over her decision to abandon condoms with a Bidlisiw staff member, who will also accompany her to the clinic the following Monday. Grace looks sideways at Maricel, gesturing with her now picked-clean kebab stick, and says, "Take a good bath before, because otherwise the nurse will get really mad and stick a ladle in you instead of a speculum." The group screeches in laughter. According to the Bidlisiw staff, Grace has a strong, salutary effect on the younger girls, pushing them to take care of their health, trying to encourage them to go back to school—so much so that the organization's leaders were eyeing her as a future peer educator. "But then, there's the baby," says Bidlisiw staff member Pam. "So who knows if she would have the time. But they really listen to her."

Bidlisiw takes a drastically different approach, offering a rigorously holistic program for children in the commercial sex industry.

Maricel refuses to reply. She stands up, brushes off the top of her pants and announces she is going home to shower before going out to meet customers.

The Bidlisiw staff have a tour in mind. We head out to a clutch of red-lighted bars, karaoke clubs, a host club full of grinning, pirouetting men who cater to foreign tourists—women and men—and "carton city," a weed-ravaged field where women used to provide sexual services on flattened cardboard boxes before a police raid earlier that year.

Our final stop is the town square, where many of the city's underage prostitutes are waiting for customers. An oddly named Orange Brutus lords over one corner of the square—evidently Orange Julius had been shanked long ago—along with an immense church, a raggedy park and an amphitheater. No less imposing is Grace, who is presiding over the scene.

Pam introduces me to a young girl Bidlisiw is trying to reach out to—M, a 16-year-old with hair so thick and curly that it seems like it has drawn all the vigor from her too-slight shoulders. Perhaps five feet tall, M is dressed in an ashy-pink one-piece, her small feet slipped into rubber flip-flops, her dark eyes alternately careless and curious. She started working the streets when she was 15. "My boyfriend took my virginity, and then left me," says M. Her voice is unexpectedly deep, a husky alto. "So what else was I good for after that? Anyway, boyfriends don't pay." She

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drags on her cigarette and then flings it into the street.

M has six siblings—most of them live with her mother and father, but she, as the oldest, lives with her grandmother. She went to school for a while, and liked it, before money got too tight and she had to quit. Working the streets isn't so bad, she says—she has her friends, the 'manager' who finds customers for her and another girl, and the small room they rent together for encounters with clients. She spends her days in the streets or the square, which she prefers—the open-air restaurant down the road has a jukebox, and she can listen to music. "I'll play my favorite song for you," she says, taking a few pesos from Pam. She runs over to the restaurant and returns to explain the lyrics of the song, "Sana." "It's about love, how you lose it but have to keep enduring." Her eyes turn toward a small boy who is frog-hopping near her, jumping but careful to keep a purple ice-cream cone from falling to the pavement. "My brother," she says. "I can actually pay for him to go to school—he's in first grade now, and if we keep it up, maybe he can actually finish…" Her eyes shine with pride, and she smiles down at him.

The look on M's face strikes me as familiar. It mirrors the IJM staff's faces when they speak of the symbolic culmination of their work: looking into the face of a rescuee, "that 15-year-old girl," whom M had been when she started working the streets. While the rescuers would never claim to impart a godly gaze, the moment of looking into that rescued girl's face seemed to reflect their own relationships with the divine—the desire to see and be seen in the light of goodness, healed and saved in the loving gaze of their creator. Each rescue was the proof of the goodness of God; each rescue described as the turning point in a life of possible redemption. The moment was a transcendent one—one that redeemed the law from being a tool in the hands of clumsy, imperfect humans and made it one that flowed out of divine authority, a moment that enabled the rescuers to feel as though they could save a girl from being an empty vessel or a dismembered body and restore her essential dignity as a child made in the image of God.

But the look on M's face also reflects the intensity of conviction with which IJM staff have spoken of their work. Her mission is to care for her brother, just as their mission is to try to save her from doing so by making a grievous choice no child could consent to under international law. They would try to offer her the safety and stability of a shelter, but it did not seem likely that she would accept rescue should it jeopardize the welfare of her family, or that she would settle for being a witness to the rescuers' good deed, or a witness in a case. The stories both the rescuers and their would-be rescuee tell about their respective roles in alleviating suffering are powerful and difficult to relinquish. M was the closest person to "the one" I would find, but her face held a tale her rescuers would be hard-pressed to unravel—the ways she'd struggled to find meaning in her own life, and sacrificed herself to become a rescuer in her own right. ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

exceeds $17. Farmers are trapped, producing cheap raw materials, which food manufacturers process into "convenient," "instant," often unhealthy but profitable crap. In 1950 the farmer received 50 cents of every retail food dollar; today it's less than 20 cents, while middlemen and manufacturers profit from cheap raw materials.

BOB SCHILDGEN

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Your food issue did not feature a single article by anyone who actually produces the food we eat. Family farmers and ranchers have been at the forefront of America's "food democracy" movement for centuries, long before anyone read *The Omnivore's Dilemma* or Wendell Berry. Food democracy is not a new concept to the farmers and ranchers who have been fighting agribusiness for decades in search of a more just, sustainable and democratic economic order that produces healthy food and vibrant rural communities. Our dairy farmers are in their worst crisis since the Great Depression, with farm suicides and foreclosures occurring at alarming rates.

The Obama administration has announced joint workshops hosted by the Agriculture and Justice departments to address anti-trust issues and corporate control of agriculture. We hope they'll cover corporate control of seed, dairy and livestock markets. This is a great victory for farmers and ranchers, who have seen their communities hollowed out, thanks to the likes of Monsanto and Tyson.

William Greider's eerily prescient "The Last Farm Crisis" [Nov. 2, 2000] highlighted the structural injustices. Please cover the perspective of the folks who toil in the fields to produce our nation's bounty.

KATHERINE OZER

ITHACA, N.Y.

I am a great fan of Michael Pollan ["Wendell Berry's Wisdom"], but his wonderful piece omitted the enormous contribution of Robert Rodale and the Rodale family, who since the 1950s have been revealing the ties between soil health, personal health and environmental and community regeneration and well-being. By 1971 (the date Pollan cites as the jump-start of the national conversation about farming, soil, food and health) Rodale had been publishing *Organic Gardening* magazine for almost thirty years and *Prevention* for more than twenty, and had endured almost twenty years of harassment by the Federal Trade Commission. In 1955 the FTC had ordered him to cease and desist from claiming, for example, that there is a correlation between heart disease and eating large quantities of meat and dairy products, or that increasing physical activity could lessen its likelihood.

JEFF BERCUVITZ, *president, Center for Leadership, Innovation and Community*

ALBUQUERQUE

I was excited to read Habiba Alcindor's "Mississippi Growing" and to hear some positive news about Holmes County, which, as Alcindor wrote, is one of the poorest counties in the country. My husband and I moved there right after World War II. He practiced medicine between Mileston and Tchula, treating mostly African-American sharecroppers.

In 1955 the KKK held a meeting at the white schoolhouse and voted that we had to leave the state. I will never forget picking up the children at school and seeing all the people headed toward the meeting. We relocated to Arizona.

SUE W. MINTER

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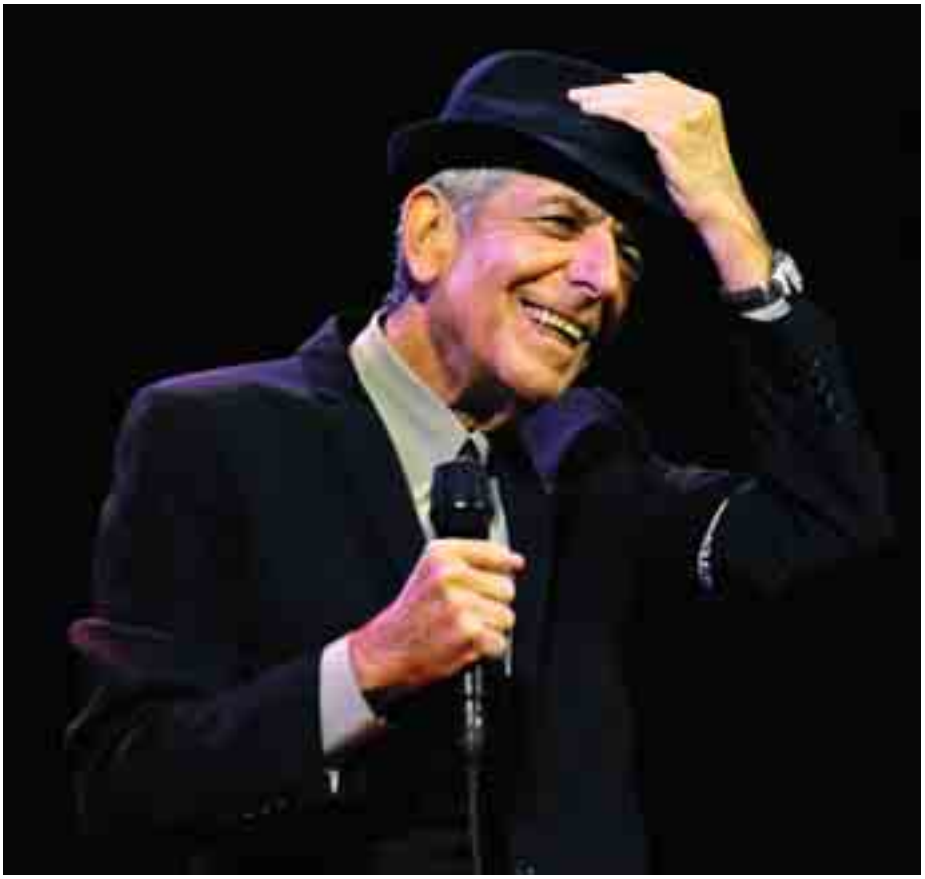
Books & the Arts.

Waiting for the Miracle

by DAVID YAFFE

"Give me a Leonard Cohen afterworld/So I can sigh eternally." It has been more than fifteen years since Kurt Cobain groaned those words on Nirvana's final album, at a time when Cohen was on a tour that could have been his last. Cobain was 26, and with the aid of a shotgun he would soon deliver himself to his own afterworld; Cohen was 59, "just a crazy kid with a dream," as he likes to say these days. In the decade that followed, Cohen would study religious practices and retire from touring; his hair would turn a ghostly white; his longtime (and now former) manager, Kelley Lynch, would misappropriate millions of dollars from his retirement account. In 2006 Cohen filed suit against her in a Los Angeles court and won, but with payment of the $9 million settlement in limbo (Lynch has ignored the ruling and brushed off subpoenas), he decided to earn his keep by embarking on another final tour in 2008 and 2009. The Leonard Cohen Afterworld was going to happen after all. The man who had once been anointed the "prince of bummers" by *The New Yorker* was soon presiding over a tightly choreographed career retrospective and hopping on- and offstage with a toothy grin.



CHRIS PIZZELLO/AP

Leonard Cohen performing at the Coachella festival in Indio, California, April 17

Despite his bread-and-butter motives, Cohen has approached the tour with anything but cynicism. With self-deprecating humor and septuagenarian angst, and draped in dapper men's wear, Cohen often delivers his songs on one knee, hat in hand, as if begging or sermonizing, supplicant not only to the audience and his fellow musicians but to music itself. His voice ranges from gruff crooning to keening on the lowest frequencies, and each song he sings, plucked from nearly his entire recording career, going back to 1967, is somehow about a search for beauty, for lust, for wisdom. (The two albums missing from the tour's playlist, *Death of a Ladies' Man*, from 1977, and *Dear Heather*, from 2004, perhaps journeyed too deep into the valley of sleaze to make the cut.) The songs are about making love or sitting at a master's feet—or both.

I saw Cohen from coast to coast: New York City in February, Los Angeles in April. In between I caught a performance in Claremont, California, of *The Book of Longing*, a 2006 collaboration between Cohen and Philip Glass that set poems of Cohen's to chilly atmospheric music. I walked out of the New York performance at the newly restored Beacon Theatre dizzy with gratitude. Cohen played for three impassioned hours; his band's musicianship was superb, and he told stellar jokes. He recited lines from selected songs, as if to emphasize that his lyrics were not merely poetic but poetry. From "Democracy": "But I'm stubborn as those garbage bags that Time cannot decay,/I'm junk but I'm still holding up this little wild bouquet." From "Anthem": "Ring the bells that still can ring./Forget your perfect offering./There is a crack in everything./That's how the light gets in." Garbage, music, stoicism, beauty, truth: Cohen's signature elements all linked in perfect rhyming couplets. When Cohen recited lines, he slowed down his delivery—even in a night of pop music—to allow the audience to savor every syllable. On one song, alternate lyrics for "A Thousand Kisses Deep," he drew cheers by doing nothing but recite. The audience laughed at the jokes and seemed stunned by the profundities. *Live in London*, a 2008 performance recorded at London's 02 Arena (where Michael Jackson was to have launched his comeback), features a set list similar to the current tour's and lots of patter almost identical to what I heard this year. Just pretend it's spontaneous.

There was a point in Cohen's life when singing in public, even talking in private, seemed impossible. It was a lull Cohen sought out and sustained through ritual and adopted

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David Yaffe is a professor of English at Syracuse University and the author of Fascinating Rhythm: Reading Jazz in American Writing *(Princeton).*

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practice. In the early '90s he retreated to the Mount Baldy Zen Center, where he was given the name Jikan, meaning "the silent one." On warm days in California's Inland Empire, you can see Mount Baldy's snowy summit, and Cohen was in the thick of it for five years, with his Japanese master, Kyozan Joshu Roshi, who would drink $300 bottles of scotch with his student and dispense whatever wisdom could breach the language barrier. "I not Japanese, you not Jewish," Roshi told Cohen, establishing, as an initial premise, suspended identities.

Ten New Songs, from 2001, was the first album Cohen released after descending from the mountain. Its lead track, "In My Secret Life," hinted at the vibe of the afterworld to come, which when staged in 2008 would command four-figure prices on eBay for tickets to sold-out venues. On "In My Secret Life," Cohen whittled down his lyrics to essential phrases and his voice to a droning lower baritone, creating a Tibetan throat singer oration that is the polar opposite of an operatic upward trill:

> I bite my lip.
> I buy what I'm told:
> From the latest hit,
> To the wisdom of old.

The trajectory between the latest hit and the wisdom of old is a long one, and Cohen prolongs it, especially in performances, by singing "ooooooooooohhhhhhhhhhhhld," as if old age is something that might last a very long time. "I was born like this, I had no choice./I was born with the gift of a golden voice," Cohen explains in "The Tower of Song," and while he was singing from an imagined posthumous position when he recorded the tune in his early 50s in 1988, he had grown into it by the time he was performing the song for adoring crowds in 2008 and 2009. Every time he sang it, especially the line "I was born with the gift of a golden voice," he was rewarded with a huge cheer. (During the Mount Baldy scotch sessions, Roshi, who was in his 90s, would say, "Excuse me for not dying." Cohen says he now feels this way himself.) "I'm turning tricks, I'm getting fixed,/I'm back on Boogie Street," he sang on "A Thousand Kisses Deep" when he had taken up speaking and singing again. If he only knew.

The year 2008 proved to be when Leonard Cohen finally became a mainstream figure. Cohen was discovered in 1967 by John Hammond, Columbia Records' legendary talent scout, who was willing to take a chance on a thirtysomething Canadian poet and novelist who had fallen in with Warhol's Factory crowd while pursuing a musical career in Greenwich Village. Four decades later, Cohen was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame alongside Madonna, John Mellencamp and the Ventures, and refused to perform. Lou Reed's introduction, a rambling tribute to the marvel of Cohen's lyrics, included a statement of uncharacteristic beneficence: "We are so lucky to be alive at the same time Leonard Cohen is." Cohen made his entrance, told a self-deprecating zinger and, in the spirit of Reed's introduction, he recited "The Tower of Song" before exiting the stage. "I'll be speaking to you sweetly from my window in the tower of song," he promised in a rasp, perhaps keeping his own afterworld in check.

Cohen's *oeuvre* is part moping soundtrack, part worship and part kvetching and kvelling.

By the end of the year, Cohen had performed around a hundred concerts and discovered that two cover versions of his song "Hallelujah"—which he had originally recorded for *Various Positions* (1984), an album that Columbia had at first deemed unworthy of release in the United States—were competing for the top spot on the Christmas charts in Britain. The covers, by British reality-show contestant Alexandra Burke and American singer-songwriter Jeff Buckley, ended the year at No. 1 and No. 2, respectively (Cohen's original hovered in the mid-30s), making it the first song in more than fifty years to occupy the top two spots on the British charts. In the United States, Buckley's version peaked at No. 1, a remarkable feat for a song recorded more than a decade earlier, three years before the singer's accidental death at age 30 in 1997. The tragedy of Buckley's short life, as opposed to the phenomenon of Cohen's long one, may have had something to do with the popularity of his cover version. Perhaps listeners preferred Buckley's opiate beauty to Cohen's gruff poetry. Maybe they got hooked on the mellifluous chord substitution Buckley added, which sounds like the "secret chord" David plays for the Lord in the song's first verse. Maybe the sepia-toned video of Buckley lip-synching the song, so fey and self-destructive, was just too swoon-worthy. Or maybe millions of people liked Buckley's version of "Hallelujah" simply because it sounds like many other covers of the song—especially Rufus Wainwright's, which appeared on the *Shrek* soundtrack. "Hallelujah" has become such a pop staple that it was even performed by *American Idol* finalist Jason Castro, a sensitive young white guy with dreadlocks. Randy, Paula and Simon loved the song, and especially—need it be added?—Buckley's version.

Mixing sacred and profane verses, "Hallelujah" is about the folly of trying to live a sanctified life in a fallen, imperfect world. The song offers biblical wisdom, sexual healing and haunted, inspired solitude. The singer looks for beauty in every syllable, every stroke of sex, every note that is offered up to the Lord—to G-d, as Cohen writes—but he also realizes, at least implicitly, that it is his lust, his flaws, that cause a stupendous, epic fall. The only version of "Hallelujah" as sublime as Cohen's is one performed by Bob Dylan in 1988 in Montreal. (It's available online.) Dylan's voice, like Cohen's, is gravelly, and when he sings "there's a blaze of light in every word," you can glimpse the illumination amid the haze. When Dylan first heard the song, along with the rest of *Various Positions*, he said that Cohen's songs were starting to sound more like prayers.

"Hallelujah" took Cohen years to write, and he would continue to sort out the verses after recording it. The germ of the song's memorable first verse—"You don't really care for music, do you?" rhyming, inimitably, with "hallelujah"—can be found in the opening lines of a short prose piece called "The News You Really Hate," from *Death of a Lady's Man*, a volume of poems released the year after Cohen's 1977 album *Death of a Ladies' Man*: "You fucking whore. I thought that you were really interested in music." The tone is quite different—it would never be mistaken as prayerful—but the sense of devotion is just as acute. For Cohen, music is holy, a prayer. If a lover doesn't share this with him, presumably, it is a betrayal. This is the same Cohen who, in "Suzanne" (1967), his original signature tune, sang, in the second person, "You've touched her perfect body/with your mind." Cohen's voice leads us to a mind always seeking perfection, not just in an erotic experience but a spiritual one. Like John Donne, Cohen constantly pairs the sacred and the profane—a coupling rooted in deep study. The original lyrics of "Hallelujah" (the word literally means "praise God")

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were all biblical in origin: the stories of David and the Lord, Samson and Delilah. Cohen was unsatisfied with a wholly biblical saga and added secular verses, but even in them his metaphorical arsenal found religion: "I remember when I moved in you,/and the holy dove was moving too,/and every breath we drew was Hallelujah!"

"You don't really care for music, do you?" For those of us who do, listening to Cohen's *oeuvre* has been part moping soundtrack, part worship and part kvetching and kvelling. Despite Cohen's acoustic guitar and its early flamenco leanings, there is not a "pure" Cohen with roots in the folk scene or the Pete Seeger songbook. John Hammond did not pluck Cohen from folk clubs, as he had done with Dylan earlier in the decade. In 1966 Cohen was a poet and novelist—he had sold a few thousand copies of his novels and collections of verse in Canada—who was just learning to perform. The poetry world was small, the Canadian one even smaller, and Cohen was seeking a bigger stage. A chance encounter with Judy Collins led to his serenading her, on the phone, with "Suzanne." She recorded it almost instantly. Shortly thereafter, Cohen found himself giving an impromptu performance for Hammond in his room in the Chelsea Hotel. Hammond later pressed Cohen to reproduce in the studio what he had heard in that room, but it didn't work out that way. Cohen needed to be almost hypnotized to be so hypnotic on songs like "The Stranger Song," "Master Song" and, really, all the tunes that ended up on *Songs of Leonard Cohen* (1967). Cohen was no folkie; according to Hammond, Cohen felt that he needed to augment his voice with strings, with odd distracting timbres and windup toys, and even with amateurish white backup singers who sounded like they were harmonizing in a schoolyard. (Later, the Cohenettes would become sassier and more racially mixed.) It was the artist, not the label, who wanted to sweeten his dark songs with fiddles and studio trickery. The album has endured for more than forty years, and all its eccentric features heralded the shape of Cohen's sonic choices to come.

Despite featuring the much-loved "Bird on the Wire" (a song whose first three lines Kris Kristofferson would like carved on his tombstone) and a boisterous mouth harp, *Songs From a Room* (1969), recorded in Nashville, was inevitably a letdown from a debut that was also an instant classic. *Songs of Love and Hate* (1971) and *New Skin for the Old Ceremony* (1974) were angsty masterpieces—sometimes Cohen's placid drone would spiral into screams. Highlights include the self-laceration of "Dress Rehearsal Rag," which offers suicidal ideation with a twisted imagination, leading to a chorus of children singing, sometimes like a taunt, the refrain, "And wasn't it a long way down"; a morbid rereading of a Yom Kippur prayer on "Who by Fire?" which sounds like a series of coronary reports chanted by a rabbinical Dr. Seuss; and "Diamonds in the Mine," which sounds like an approximation of what would happen if the Rabelaisian Philip Roth of that period decided to write a country and western number.

One of the splendors of the current tour is that Cohen's songbook from the 1980s—the decade when music was often churned into electronic treacle by some of the greatest innovators of the '60s—is played by living, breathing, talented musicians. Like Dylan on *Empire Burlesque* (1985) and Joni Mitchell on *Dog Eat Dog* (1985), Cohen was smitten with synthesizers during the 1980s; being his own orchestrator proved too tempting, even if the timbres of the moment sounded ersatz. Would a synthesizer replace the piano the way the piano replaced the clavier? Futurists of the 1980s thought so. "Now, I don't want you to be alarmed, but this goes on by itself," Cohen said at the Beacon in February before flicking on the keyboard and letting the artifice flow. It was "The Tower of Song" sounding like a Ramada Inn lounge on amateur night; the exalted lyrics about life entering its last throes seemed perfectly matched with the coldly automatic apparatus, as if death operated via cheap machinery. Cohen, in a timed joke, told the audience they were "too kind" after he played what sounded like a deliberately amateurish keyboard solo. "The maestro says it's Mozart/but it sounds like bubblegum," Cohen grunt-croons on "Waiting for the Miracle." On "The Tower of Song" he did both voices.

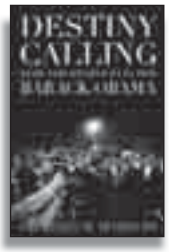
Wagner's music, said Mark Twain, is better than it sounds, and albums like *Various Positions* and *I'm Your Man* (1988), both of which feature stellar songwriting and, with Cohen's newly husky voice, haunting singing, boast timeless songs marred by dated production. (Despite the electronic din, one highlight among many was "Take This Waltz," an adaptation of his poetic idol Federico García Lorca's "Little Viennese Waltz," in which the best lines are inimitably Cohen's.) For a while, Cohen's sonic palette seemed to mimic the soundtrack of *Miami Vice*—a show on which he appeared in 1986, speaking deadpan French. Now,

Stimulus package.

WILLIAM L. O'NEILL
A Bubble in Time

In this compellingly readable history of America in the interwar years, 1989–2001, Mr. O'Neill captures the spirit of a society that was happier, safer, and materially better off—but suffered the anguish of an out-of control popular culture. "A witty and wickedly perceptive account….This is narrative history at its finest."—DAVID OSHINSKY.

CHARLES M. MADIGAN
Destiny Calling



Through the stories of representative Americans, Mr. Madigan taps a range of voices to help us understand how the election of Barack Obama happened. "A wonderful trip through the 2008 presidential race (and the country)… insightful, original, readable as hell." —JON MARGOLIS.

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with new arrangements, he has been opening his shows with the majestic "Dance Me to the End of Love." The song sounded ticky-tacky on *Various Positions* (reminiscent of a low-budget wedding in Prague in the last years of the Iron Curtain); on tour, surrounded by the virtuosic bandurria of Javier Mas and the swinging clarinet of Dino Soldo, Cohen intones his impassioned verse with the stellar musicianship he deserves.

After recording his phenomenal *The Future* (1992) with a band—in preparation for a tour the next year—Cohen returned to the synthetic side of the street with *Ten New Songs*, which demonstrated how much better artifice could sound by the twenty-first century, with improved technology that allows fake to sound less fake. Cohen scrawled down the lyrics—some of which appear in his *Book of Longing* (2006)—and asked the rhythm and blues singer Sharon Robinson to write the melodies, as she had done previously for "Everybody Knows" and "Waiting for the Miracle." But Cohen wasn't quite ready to leave the mountaintop. Aided by millennial studio technology (including overdubs by the harmonizing women who have become expected accoutrements at this point), he growled and crooned all by himself.

Despite being on what seems like the final leg of a long goodbye tour that will feature fall dates at big venues (including Madison Square Garden) and conclude, as of this writing, in San Jose in November, Cohen is the monkish Jikan once more—except when he performs. He still mostly avoids reporters (he's selling out shows with nary a peep to them); he's trying to preserve his voice. His silence is temporary; his afterworld lasts longer. And yet when we leave it, we know that, unlike other afterworlds, it won't last forever. But we try to let it linger. Cohen was aware of Kurt Cobain's invocation of him in "Pennyroyal Tea," and it clearly gave him pause. In the Leonard Cohen Afterworld, Cobain's suicide remained a troubling event. Cohen had known darkness and sang about it many times. "Now if you can manage to get your trembling fingers to behave,/Why don't you try unwrapping a stainless steel razor blade?" he asked, looking contemptuously at his reflection in "Dress Rehearsal Rag." Yes, he had suffered and he had prepared for the end, but he didn't actually draw blood. Now he's serving the muse into his 70s. "I'm sorry I couldn't have spoken to the young man," said Cohen to a Canadian journalist a year after Cobain's death. "There are always alternatives, and I might have been able to lay something on him." ■

End-of-Self Help

by ALEXANDER PROVAN

Nothing to Be Frightened Of
By Julian Barnes.
Vintage. 243 pp. Paper $15.

The Book of Dead Philosophers
By Simon Critchley.
Vintage. 265 pp. Paper $15.95.

In December 2007, at the annual World Congress on Anti-Aging Medicine in Las Vegas, Suzanne Somers, the actress and bestselling author of *Ageless: The Naked Truth About Bioidentical Hormones*, delivered a rhapsodic keynote speech in praise of hormone replacement therapy. "I go to these parties sometimes with all these successful men who've really achieved in their careers," she told the enthusiastic, middle-aged crowd. "Seventies, eighties, and they're out of gas. They're just so out of gas! They all sit there, they're drooping—their face, their body's drooping—they've all got deep belly fat, they're all kind of grumpy.... And I look at them and I think, 'This out of gas doesn't have to be!' You know this. I know this. It's hormones!"

Thanks to modern science, the grail of enduring youthfulness—if not eternal youth—is within the grasp of middle-class Americans, for whom the road to senescence is now paved with restorative procedures and rejuvenating formulas. You *can* be young again, at least until you're dead. And while Somers is still a ways from a National Institutes of Health appointment, the government and its bedfellows in the private sector are enmeshed in life extension of the more pedestrian variety. Sustaining people in the last two years of their lives consumes a third of Medicare's budget, and of the 16 percent of the country's GDP that is now spent on healthcare, an ever growing proportion is dedicated to treating a range of diseases that would have been death sentences half a century ago. Medical advances have pushed back old age—the duration of the average American life has increased by a decade since 1950—and turned the final years into a series of expensive encounters with corpse-maintenance machines.

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"Demonic Temptation to Despair," from the Kachelofen *Ars Moriendi*, 1495–98

And this may be only a prelude. There are those who say we are not even beginning to approach the horizon of mortality, and that death may be delayed another twenty, thirty, even fifty years. Aubrey de Gray, a biogerontologist who is perhaps the foremost scientific proponent of life extension, argues that through cell therapy and the deceleration of metabolism, we'll be able to "eliminate aging as a cause of death this century," allowing people to live as long as a thousand years. Much to the chagrin of so-called bioconservatives, we are redefining what is "humanly possible," as well as what is human.

Alexander Provan, a writer living in Brooklyn, is a founding editor of Triple Canopy *and contributing editor of* Bidoun.

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Death has always been feared and eternal life sought, but for most of human history anxiety about death was resolved through the promise of an afterlife—hence the treasure-packed burial chambers of the pyramids, the human ash clogging the Ganges and the catacombs of Rome. Why? "People didn't live half so long in the old days," as the novelist Julian Barnes points out in *Nothing to Be Frightened Of*, his memoir of mortality. "Forty was doing very well, given pestilence and war, with the doctor as likely to kill as cure. To die from 'a draining away of one's strength caused by extreme old age' was in Montaigne's day a 'rare, singular and extraordinary death.' Nowadays we assume it as our right."

The ancients lived in much greater proximity to death, which may explain the Greeks' sober estimation of Hades, lord of the underworld: "He was unpitying, inexorable, but just," according to the classicist Edith Hamilton, a "terrible" but "not an evil god." Today's obsessions with everlasting youth and life extension are spurred by our cognitive distance from death, as we have ever more reason to defer our contemplation of its icy embrace. And yet if the task of philosophy is, as Cicero put it, "to learn how to die," it's a wonder there aren't more Wittgensteins among us: now the golden years stretch on and on, stinking of death, and so they also provide ample time for considering it.

"Angelic Inspiration Against Despair," from the Kachelofen *Ars Moriendi*, 1495–98

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Of course, contemplation of death is not restricted to seniors, though extra years may grant us more time to steel ourselves for the moment when our organs cease functioning, the mind becomes muddled and the hormonal bank is cashed out. And there is plenty of evidence that fear of death will survive the longevity economy it begat. How else to explain that the most popular nonfiction book of our time is not a romance novel, get-rich-quick guide or legal thriller but a memento mori: *The Purpose-Driven Life*, by Rick Warren, with more than 30 million copies sold to date. "You may feel it's morbid to think about death, but actually it's unhealthy to live in denial of death and not consider what is inevitable," Warren writes. "Only a fool would go through life unprepared for what we all know will eventually happen. You need to think more about eternity, not less." The megachurch magnate's tract alloys the metaphysical concerns of classical philosophy and the tautologies of evangelical Protestantism to create a millennial "anti-self-help book," guiding readers away from questions about their success, status, self-worth and virility, and toward an understanding of why God has placed them on earth and what they are meant to do here—meaning how they are meant to serve Him.

To Warren, mundane reality is "the staging area, the preschool, the tryout for your life in eternity. It is the practice workout before the actual game; the warm-up lap before the race begins." It is, in the words of Thomas Browne, "but a small parenthesis in eternity," and it is impossible to live well without reconciling oneself to this fact.

According to Simon Critchley, a philosopher at The New School in New York City, there's a simple explanation for the anxiety afflicting readers of Somers and Warren: "What defines human life in our corner of the planet at the present time is not just a fear of death," which is normal enough, "but an overwhelming *terror* of annihilation." Critchley's *Book of Dead Philosophers*, a survey of nearly 200 philosophers' views on mortality in relation to their own lives and deaths, attempts to show how embracing the ideal of the philosophical death can help us vanquish this terror without recourse to the promise of a great beyond.

All philosophy positions itself in relation to death, and the foreknowledge of divine judgment was once its great consolation. But ever since Averroës declared philosophy independent of theology in the twelfth century, that consolation has heartened the religious alone. It's no surprise that, for Warren, "revelation beats speculation any day." He has little use for modes of thinking that emphasize inquiry over knowledge. What the minister offers is assurance that God is not dead, and that the medieval understanding of death as a continuation of one's service to God ("your birthday into eternal life") is still valid. Philosophy provides much colder comfort. At its most frank, there is Schopenhauer: "We begin in the madness of carnal desire and the transport of voluptuousness, we end in the dissolution of all our parts and the musty stench of corpses." At its most astringent, there is Seneca: "You act like mortals in all that you fear, and like immortals in all that you desire." At its most agnostic, there is La Rochefoucauld: "Nothing proves as well that philosophers are not as convinced as they claim that death is not an evil, as the torment they go through in order to establish the immortality of their names by the loss of their lives."

Generations of philosophers have contended that to live with death on the mind is to allay the anxiety of mortality. In *Nothing to Be Frightened Of*, Barnes somewhat tentatively takes up this assertion, convinced of the value of meditating on death but unconvinced that the end result of that endeavor could be anything like "coming to terms." He sides with Freud, who wrote, "It is indeed impossible to imagine our own death; and whenever we attempt to do so, we can perceive that we are in fact still present as spectators." Philosophers, in his estimation, are satisfied spectators of the self.

Critchley disagrees. "The philosopher," in his decidedly macho formulation, "looks death in the face and has the strength to say that it is nothing."

Barnes turns to melancholy, and Jules Renard: "The word that is most true, most exact, most filled with meaning, is the word 'nothing.'" For most people, neither "nothing" compares with the succoring image of St. Peter presiding at the pearly gates.

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In the future, we may be able to engineer our way out of death or at least buy ourselves a few hundred years. But for now, the coming-to-terms paradigm is still fairly close to what Swiss-born psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross prescribed in her book *On Death and Dying* (1969), which birthed the Conscious Dying movement and provided the Age of Aquarius with a thanatological gloss. Kübler-Ross's model of the five stages of dying—denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance—is her most enduring legacy, still widely used by mental health professionals to explain how people with terminal illnesses, as well as their bereaved, confront and cope with death. Less remembered are Kübler-Ross's more radical, Eastern-influenced views about death: she encouraged her followers to devote their lives to "death awareness," viewing the end of life as a spiritual progression toward a transcendent, universal form of existence, an ascension made possible by the cool acceptance of mortality. Not only should the living envy the dead, she suggested; they should imitate them, abasing the self until nothing but an empty vessel remains. Then you could meet your maker in monastic form, just like St. Antony, who in Critchley's telling "stretched his feet out a little and looked upon death with joy."

But much later in life, after a series of strokes had left her paralyzed and scandals had damaged her professional reputation, Kübler-Ross proved herself just another backslider. "I love E.T.," she told a fellow aficionado of the paranormal in a 1997 interview, "because he represents everything I believe in: to prolong life—when they hook him up to the machines." By the time she reached her deathbed, in 2004, Kübler-Ross had convinced herself that death as such did not actually exist.

If "death is the limit in relation to which life is lived," Critchley writes, too few people today are willing to accept their limit; they deny it even as they suffer incontinence, deformation and what the novelist Lawrence Durrell described as "the slow disgracing of the mind." The biological sciences hint at a greater conundrum: Barnes observes that their major achievement over the past century has been to discover that the autonomous individual is, at root, a genetically determined package of cells. Our limits may be extendable, but in other ways we are even more limited than once thought. Not only must we eventually die; we must admit that the self is a clever fabrication, however it benefits us evolutionarily. Furthermore, we must assume that death as we know it will also expire: when the sun goes cold in a few billion years, it won't be *Homo sapiens* toasting it farewell.

Critchley argues that this reality should not impinge on our desire to die as we have lived—if we have lived bravely, drolly and with panache. For him, the best deaths are those in which a lifetime of fruitful rumination on the nature of mortality ends with gracious acceptance and perhaps a final-breath witticism to boot. Critchley relates the story of St. Thomas More, who while imprisoned in the Tower of London awaiting his beheading wrote a meditation on the pain endured by Christ on the cross; when the moment of his execution arrived, More calmly applied his blindfold and awaited the blade. John Locke also died at peace, declaring, "I have lived long enough and I thank God I have enjoyed a happy life; but after all this life is nothing but vanity." The ancient skeptic Anaxarchus made the mistake of insulting Nicocreon, the tyrant of Cyprus, who later deposited him into a man-size mortar and pulverized him with iron pestles. But he denied his materiality till the end, gleefully shrieking, "Pound, pound the pouch containing Anaxarchus, you do not pound Anaxarchus."

Then there are those who died in character, if not with dignity or slogans. Pythagoras' hauteur is said to have offended a powerful Calabrian, who sent his retinue to chase the philosopher. They burned down his house and pursued him as far as a bean field, which Pythagoras refused to cross—he and his followers had a prohibition against the testicular-looking legume—and then cut this throat. Later, the Sicilian tyrant Dionysius captured and tortured Pythagoras' acolyte Timycha in order to find out why her master would rather die than come into contact with beans; she bit her tongue off and spat it at Dionysius, taking the secret to her grave. Heraclitus died somewhat less nobly. In order to cure his dropsy, he covered himself in dung; either the dung was wet, causing him to drown, or it was dry, and the sun entombed him in adobe.

Perhaps we should all hope to die well, if not to enjoy the pleasure of a last line delivered with aplomb among loved ones, a bon mot denying the Angel of Death his satisfaction. But the point of Critchley's book is not so much to recommend any particular variation on the good death as to suggest that heightened attention to mortality increases our quality of life. His keystone here is Montaigne, who took pleasure in stories of ancient Egyptians bringing a skeleton to banquets and propping it up like a scarecrow. "Drink

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and be merry," its caretaker would call out, "for when you are dead you will be like this." The lesson Montaigne absorbed from this scene was to have "death continually present, not merely in my imagination, but in my mouth." Critchley takes it further: "To philosophize, then, is to learn to have death in your mouth, in the words you speak, the food you eat and the drink that you imbibe." Chew on death, and the good life will follow.

But can the classical prescription still produce these desired results? Barnes recounts the story of a man who becomes aware of his imminent mortality and resolves to do his death justice: Eugene O'Kelly, the CEO of a major accounting firm who at 53 is told he has inoperable brain cancer and less than three months to live. Immediately, O'Kelly begins drafting ways to make his death "the best death possible," applying "the skill set of a CEO" to devising the "final and most important to-do list of my life." He creates "perfect moments" and "perfect days" during which he "unwinds" his relationships with friends and loved ones. For his daughter, he arranges a sojourn to the Arctic Circle via private jet so that he can watch her "meet and trade with the Inuits."

In Barnes's estimation, this is "not so much dying in character as dying in caricature," a tragicomic update of the classical ideal. O'Kelly reacquaints himself with God, learns to meditate and makes "a positive connection to the 'other side.'" He lays out detailed plans for his funeral—Gluck's "Dance of the Blessed Spirits" arranged for flute and harp, "moving and unique" eulogies—and hires a ghostwriter to pen a memoir of his death, *Chasing Daylight*, which takes its title from a golf metaphor and reads like the ultimate case study from *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Eventually, he dies in "a state of tranquil acceptance and genuine hope."

"O'Kelly was surely dying as he had lived," Barnes acknowledges, "and we should all be so lucky."

Given advance notice, a private jet and a stockpile of cash, many of us might meet our maker as calmly as O'Kelly did. But such an end is not in the cards for most people, who as likely as not can expect their death to be painful, protracted and undignified. O'Kelly's drive to "succeed" at dying repulses Barnes because it betrays a narcissism born of privilege, a sense of metaphysical entitlement. Nevertheless, O'Kelly is not a reprehensible person. He may be self-centered and oblivious, but he also strives quite genuinely to "come to terms," and by the end of his life he believes that he has. He is a fitting advertisement for the twenty-first-century good death and a testament to why men of his position may be the most likely to attain it.

Barnes combs through the details of O'Kelly's story hoping to find some answer to the questions animating his book—questions that Critchley ignores. Has the good death ever truly existed? Should we moderns emulate what we think the ancients might have said or done?

We are programmed to fear death, and for Critchley the ancients offer a way to deprogram ourselves, overcome our basic instincts and thereby transcend both our animal nature and the degradation of contemporary life. It isn't hormone therapy, but the point nonetheless is to become a kind of superman, if in spirit rather than flesh. In some ways, Critchley's book falls under the popular *ars moriendi* literary genre inaugurated in 1415 with *Tractatus Artis Bene Moriendi* (The Art of Dying Well), which was not philosophical in its objectives but instructional, a manual on preparing oneself for a good, Christian death—what might be termed an end-of-self-help book. Critchley clearly aims to be provocative rather than didactic, but like that of the *Tractatus*, his agenda is ultimately one of self-actualization. As Critchley quotes Montaigne, "He who has learned how to die has unlearned how to be a slave."

But a slave to what? To biology, yes, but also to what Critchley derides as our culture's "countless new sophistries," which offer knowledge of self for a fee and are to us today what religion was to Marx: the "sigh of the oppressed creature." He never names these specifically, but he does contrast their promises of "Knowledge (capital K) of something called Self (capital S)" tricked out in "expensive, brightly colored wrappings" with the free and radical skepticism afforded by philosophy. Critchley allows that he wrote most of the book in Los Angeles, a city characterized by a "peculiar terror of annihilation," where "death, darkness and desperation lurk behind the various screens that human beings use to block access to the outside world: vast wrap-around sunglasses, Venetian blinds at every window and tinted glass in the black, usually German, SUVs."

The strange neon surreality of Los Angeles seems a fitting backdrop for Critchley's meditation on how we might improve our relationship with death, and his desire to penetrate the opaque surface of our plastic desires is commendable. Unfortunately, the story he tells his readers about LA is no more credible than his stories about phi-

Thin Shangdu

The millipede of furious minds
who concocts all steel sternumed glass,

imagines the heart of what they make,
all ruse & rooms of ruby ventricled
chandeliers.

Along the rear of this vertical frontier: tents
& oil spilt ponds, a jungle of bloomers
hangs on tiers of stocking string.

An opera singer, once in tiger's masque,
keens which echoes deep in the well
of his welder's mask.

A young boy dreams of mums.

CATHY PARK HONG

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losophers. They are all myths that contain elements of truth and suit his purposes. Critchley's account of the death of Pythagoras, for instance, is prefaced by an admission that, "sadly, it is now almost universally assumed by classical scholars that Pythagoras never existed.... But let's not allow Pythagoras' mere non-existence to deter us, as the stories that surround him are so compelling." Socrates, whose trial and death Critchley describes as marking the beginning of philosophy, could hardly have died as Plato says he did, calmly relaying bits of wisdom to his followers even as the poison gripped his veins, seeing as how hemlock tends to induce vomiting and violent convulsions as it courses through the body and stills the organs.

Critchley's style is pithy and anecdotal, and he is more concerned with the morals to be gleaned from these philosophers' deaths and last words than the finer points of how, when and why. The power of their stories transcends fact, as does the story of Los Angeles as a depraved cultural wasteland populated by surgically augmented seekers of eternal youth. What is important is the tincture of truth and the ease of extrapolation. But these dead thinkers are not just players on a stage to Critchley. He argues not only that the "philosophical death" is a noble idea but also that it is, in some fashion, achievable, an assertion that is undermined by his casual conflation of mythology and history, ideal and real.

Critchley may not put forth a viable antidote to Suzanne Somers and Rick Warren, but then again, the sophistries hawked by New Age gurus, life-extension enthusiasts and televangelists have been around since, well, the Sophists, and are likely to endure for as long as we do. And while many of Critchley's philosophers seem intent on conquering death, some are simply humbled by it, teaching us that "it is only in grief that we become most truly ourselves." Still others are flummoxed by death, and "despite the lofty reach of their intellect," they "cope with the hand that life deals them like the rest of us."

Between the example of Cicero and the likelihood that he will expire without grace or glory in a hospital bed, slowly deprived of his faculties, Barnes assiduously avoids any conclusion—perhaps, in part, to ward off his own. He weighs the fear of dying against the fear of not existing, considers the consolations of religion and literature and contemplates the words of philosophers and family members. He takes solace in the thought that he won't really die until his last reader does. And at the conclusion of his book, he wonders what he has accomplished with all this, whether he has "got this death thing straight—or even a little straighter."

The frivolous things with which we fill our lives may well leave us anxious, old and wanting hormone therapy, God or both. But if there is to be salvation for us on earth, we must come to terms even with those things. Or we must come to terms with not coming to terms, and move on. ■

CHRISTOPHE JEAUFFROY, © 2008, F COMME FILM/SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

Alain Resnais's *Wild Grass*

Baffled Dignity

by STUART KLAWANS

Like its title vegetation, Alain Resnais's *Wild Grass* has a free-sprouting nature, unaffected in manner and developing as it will, and as such has too little self-regard to be one of those movies about movie love. The work of an 87-year-old who has enjoyed a rich life making films, and has enriched the world immeasurably by making film history, it can afford to take its own condition as cinema for granted and concentrate on other matters: the difficult calculations involved in buying satisfactory shoes, for example, or the touching failure of dentists to establish a reassuring ambience in their offices.

Mostly the film focuses on a blind flirtation—or rather a blind hope for flirtation—or, no, a blind refusal of flirtation, as played out in the nicer suburbs of Paris between two people who are old enough to know better. Resnais's theme, in other words, is the capacity for human desire, unprompted, to leap toward the skies, and in leaping to trip over its feet. And so, even though *Wild Grass* is utterly nonchalant about its status as a movie, it makes sense that the two main characters, full of beautifully evanescent fantasy, should finally meet outside a movie theater.

The events that lead them to this meeting are simple to relate, though also as unruly as the grass that springs through cracks in the pavement. Marguerite Muir (Sabine Azéma), a woman with challenging feet, goes to the Rue de Rivoli to buy shoes. After bringing a wanly smiling clerk close to exhaustion, she exits the shop with her purchase (which is identical to the pair she was wearing) and falls victim to a purse snatcher. For reasons Marguerite may not understand, or even try to articulate to herself, she does not report the theft; but within hours, her discarded wallet is discovered in the parking garage of a shopping center miles from the Rue de Rivoli. Georges Palet (André Dussollier) sees it lying next to a tire of his car, reaches down for it, stops and then completes the circuit of

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chance by picking it up. Why did he hesitate? He might not know; but he is quick to articulate to himself an impression of the owner, based on the tantalizing scraps of information in the wallet. He will hand it in to the police, of course. He must. But first, shouldn't he call Marguerite Muir? How should the conversation go?

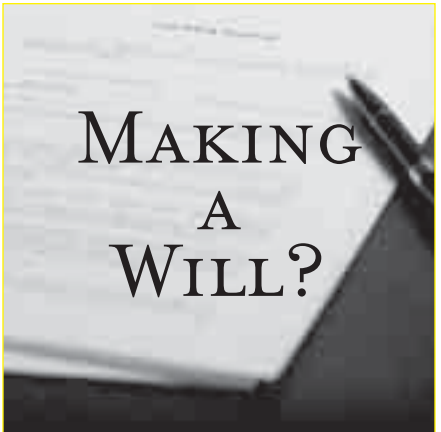
An impetuous man, outwardly shambling, settled and middle-aged but inwardly buffeted by an uncontrollable imagination, thinks he has encountered, or ought to encounter, a not-quite-unknown woman. The woman, who is literally flighty in her instincts (by avocation, she's a pilot), is nevertheless indecisive by nature and grounded by a timidity that keeps her, in her middle years, describable as pert. She has a cloud of bright red hair and a flared, piped, double-breasted coat that makes her look like the Little Prince; but day by day she works behind a white mask in her dental office, where the one pathetic hint of expansiveness is the blue-sky pattern of her wallpaper. As for Georges, he is a man with a good car, an excellently furnished house and a fine-featured, cultivated, infinitely solicitous wife at least a dozen years his junior; and yet for some time he has been stalking about like Lemmy Caution, with security guards following him with their eyes, ominous music welling up behind him and thoughts proper to a desperate ex-convict growling through his mind.

Perhaps retired, perhaps laid off, he has no job, other than to follow his wife's instructions about caring for the house; but he could be said to be employed as a writer, once he begins a campaign to make himself known to Marguerite. Working at a red typewriter, he composes copious letters full of autobiographical revelations, some of which might even be true. She studiously avoids response—although, as she's told the police with fluttering curiosity, she would like to know something about the man who returned her wallet. It's only natural.

The outline of these events, I should point out, was decided not by Resnais and his screenwriters (Alex Réval and Laurent Herbiet) but by the author Christian Gailly in his novel *L'Incident*, which served as the source for the film. More than a trace of Gailly's language has been retained, thanks to a voice-over narration recited confidingly, but with engagingly modest doublings-back and ellipses, by Edouard Baer. The Little Prince and Lemmy Caution do not figure in it; nor do any number of other details that seem highly relevant, without their actually having much to do with moving along the plot. These purely cinematic touches would include the perfect roundness of Sabine Azéma's eyes, which convey many emotions, but always as one mode or another of being startled; and the jutting ridge of André Dussollier's lower teeth, which are continually exposed by his pulling back the corners of his lips, as if the entire world were a hot stove top that he kept brushing against. If *Wild Grass* achieves a perfect tone of droll melancholy, rather than being what a mere plot synopsis would imply—the creepy story of a stalker and his victim or the heartless, madcap recounting of the pratfalls of two fools—it's largely because the baffled dignity in these faces imparts such sympathy, sorrow, warmth and subtle humor to Georges and Marguerite. And if *Wild Grass* also achieves an appearance of being natural (like Marguerite's curiosity), it's because of the similarly extra-literary contributions of Resnais.

I don't know when I last saw a film directed with such complete freedom—freedom even from ostentation about the director's mastery. You sense that all of the resources of cinema are available to Resnais at any moment; that he can make faces suddenly pop out of any part of the screen he likes, make time run in reverse, let his camera wander off to incidental points of interest, change the characters' costumes or the time of day right before your eyes. Everything seems possible—even flight, which may be a dream to Georges and a long-abandoned pleasure to Marguerite but is always an option for Resnais, whose point of view glides down from heaven or floats up to the sky as the mood takes him. This is artifice, all right, but of the sort that has become second nature to the old artificer; virtuosity, but of the sort that escapes both the constraints of gravity and the shackles of the virtuoso's desire to prove himself. In *Wild Grass*, Resnais puts his art entirely at the service of his characters and their preposterous, thoroughly human situation.

And so, in his own time, Resnais brings them together, not for the sake of the movies but (appropriately enough) at a movie theater: the sort of revival house you find tucked away on the side streets of Paris, in midblock. From the sidewalk, a red carpet grandly ascends four little steps. At their summit stretches a portal that comprises gleaming red doors, each barely wide enough to admit people in single file. Topping the facade, the word *Cinéma* in neon script blazes in the night, just above a marquee low enough to smack your head. Expectation and its disappointment, combined in a single piece of vernacular architecture: this is the view



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from the cafe across the street, where a woman with a cloud of red hair watches impatiently for the last show to let out. She knows this theater is about to release her fate—which is to say, a man she has not yet seen but is sure she'll recognize. She has found out that he'll be here, alone and miles from home approaching midnight; and she knows he's been dreaming of her, a woman he knows only as an ID photo and a voice on the telephone.

Wild Grass had its US premiere in late September at the New York Film Festival, where it had been chosen to serve as the opening-night feature—a distinction that always has at least the potential to seem symbolic to American cinephiles. And who, exactly, is a cinephile? You could say it's someone who would use that word; or, in a better mood, you might say it's anyone who would like to think of film not just as commerce and entertainment but as art. *Wild Grass* put the cinephile now writing into the best of moods. For one night, at least, art had triumphed, which is symbolism enough. But if more is needed, it can be found in the participation in *Wild Grass* of longtime Resnais collaborators such as Azéma and Dussollier but also of extraordinary members of a younger French generation: actors Mathieu Amalric, Anne Consigny and Emmanuelle Devos and cinematographer Eric Gautier. Now they, too, are part of the Resnais tradition, and can pass it on for years to come.

To ask for still more symbolism would be to let desire overleap. It's enough to say that you, cinephile, can look forward to a regular theatrical release of *Wild Grass* in 2010. If you should become impatient, you might make use of the time by preparing yourself at a traveling Resnais retrospective, which is on view in Los Angeles and will soon be showing up in Chicago, Berkeley, Madison, Columbus, Cambridge and Houston. For information on the retrospective, visit frenchculture.org. For a good time: call on *Wild Grass*.

In 1959, at the Cannes festival, Resnais's *Hiroshima, mon amour* shared the International Critics' Prize with a picture titled *Araya*: the work of a 32-year-old Venezuelan named Margot Benacerraf, who resisted having her film categorized as a documentary, preferring to think of it as a poem. Resnais's uncategorizable film, of course, went on to astonish, puzzle and bother the hell out of audiences around the world, and has remained in circulation in one form or another ever since. *Araya* all but disappeared. It waited until 1967 to receive distribution in France, premiered in Venezuela in 1977 and emerged in the United States only briefly in 1987, as part of the traveling series "Latin American Visions." Although Benacerraf had gone on to establish Venezuela's Cineteca Nacional, *Araya* seemed destined to be one of those legendary films found only in books.

This situation changed on October 7, when Milestone Film and Video began the US theatrical release of its wonderfully restored print of *Araya*.

Set on a barren peninsula in northern Venezuela, *Araya* begins with an invocation of the elements: tall, brooding masses of clouds, onslaughts of glistening waves, terrifying expanses of hills and ravines that appear to be purely mineral, without any trace of life. The black-and-white images, by cinematographer Giuseppe Nisoli, seem overpoweringly elemental themselves, with their dazzling tonal contrasts; and the atonal music by Guy Bernard, composed in the dated yet strangely compelling style of marimba modernism, adds to the sense of an encounter with something at once earthly and alien.

A brief history lesson follows, narrated in voiceover: the story of the Spanish discovery, early in the sixteenth century, of the vast salt marsh at Araya and the exploitation of this valuable resource. And once the Spanish left, the narrator asks, and their fortress fell into ruin, what became of the people who mined the salt?

The answer comes in the form of a crane shot, which rises over a huge white pyramid to reveal lines of men stretching from the foreground down to the distant edge of the sea. Naked to their waists, and with baskets on their heads, they follow one another from the shore to the top of the pyramid and back down again, carrying loads of salt and dumping them over and over and over. Nothing has changed, the narrator intones, for 450 years.

From this point on, *Araya* is a synthesis of one day in the unvarying lives of these people: a family of salt haulers who work on the beach; another family that digs salt out of the shallows; and a third family that fishes for a living, providing the salt miners with their only source of food. I can compare the film only to Luchino Visconti's great *La Terra Trema* for its combination of extraordinary beauty, outraged social conscience and almost mythic grandeur—with the exception that *Araya* is about a reality even more harsh, more pitiless and more doomed. The experience was stunning in 1959. It's every bit as stunning today. ■

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Events

MASSACHUSETTS

Symposium on Social Change

■ University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Todd Gitlin and Raymond Mungo on media and social change: Cape Cod Lounge, Campus Center, October 29, 7 PM. Blake Slonecker on Liberation News Service: DuBois Library, twenty-fifth floor, October 29, 4 PM. Ray Luc Levasseur on his sedition trial: Amherst Room, Campus Center, tenth floor, November 12, 7 PM.

NEW YORK

Reckoning With Torture: Memos and Testimonies From the 'War on Terror'

■ Readings by Matthew Alexander, Paul Auster, Don DeLillo, Eve Ensler, Jack Rice, Amrit Singh and Art Spiegelman. Art by Jenny Holzer. Presented by PEN, ACLU and Cooper Union. October 13, 7 PM, Cooper Union's Great Hall, New York City. For more information, visit smarttix.com or call (212) 868-4444.

Community Gathering on Healthcare Reform

■ Sunday, October 18, 3 PM. Riverdale Temple. 4545 Independence Avenue, Bronx. Speakers: Representative Eliot Engel, cosponser of HR 676; Dr. Leonard Rodberg, chair of the Department of Urban Studies at Queens College and researcher for PHNP; Dr. Elizabeth Rosenthal, board member PNHP. For more information, call (718) 549-1601.

Close US Military Bases In the Pacific

■ On Sunday, November 8, the Granny Peace Brigade will present its fourth teach-in focusing on US overseas military bases. Speakers will discuss the destructive impact of bases in Japan, Korea and the Philippines. Protest movements in these countries resist the US military presence. Confirmed speakers: Dr. Joseph Gerson, American Friends' Service Committee; Ninotchka Rosca, Philippine-born activist, Gabriela Network; Dr. Virginia Rodino, Korea Peace Campaign and Asia Pacific Freeze Campaign; Pete Bronson, Korean War veteran. Moderator: Vinie Burrows, actress and Women's International Democratic Federation. Free. Hunter College/CUNY West Building, seventh-floor lecture hall. 1:30-5 PM. Refreshments at 1 PM. For more information, visit grannypeacebrigade.org or call (212) 865-7875.

The advertising deadline for Events is every Thursday. Rates: $210 for 50 words; $260 for 75 words, additional words (above 75) $2.00 each. To place an ad, call Amanda at (212) 209-5414.

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Puzzle No. 3188

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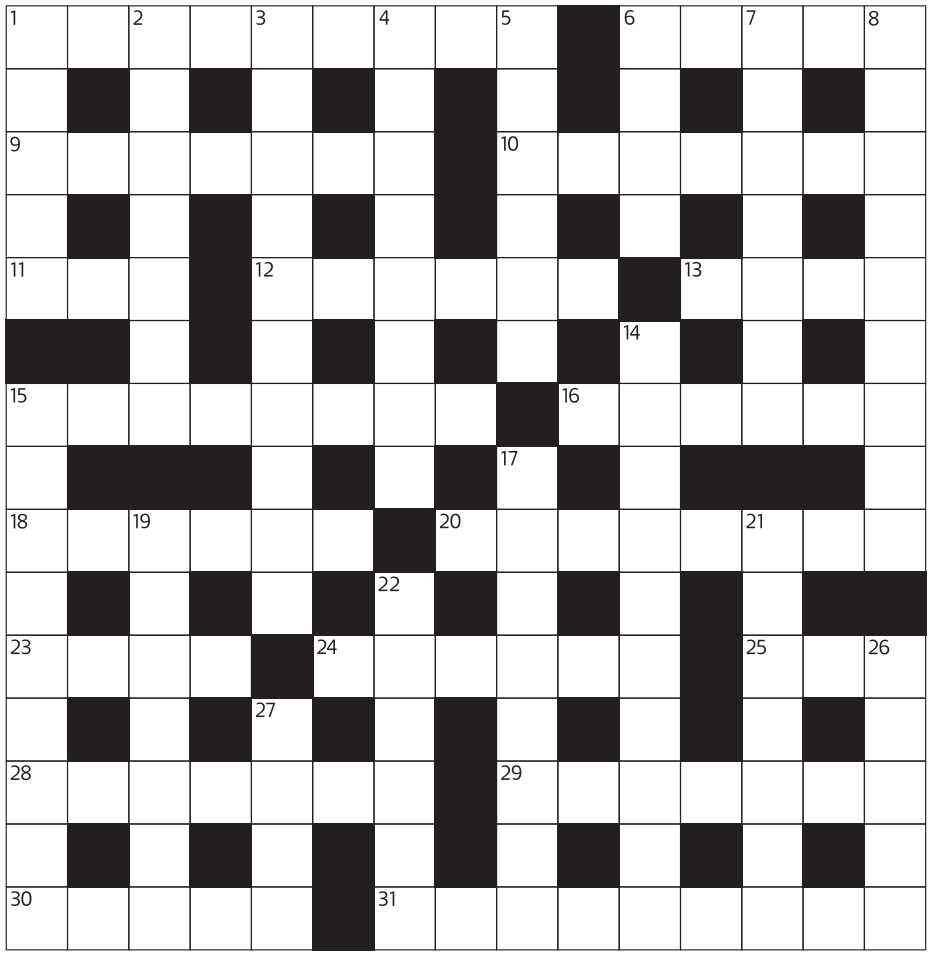

ACROSS

1 Such a chase is useless, crazy and foul, I hear. (4,5)

6 Only a word about a leading beginner in the Globe? (5)

9 Just the opposite of 8 as a way to show your fancy duds. (5,2)

10 See 27 down

11 Some question about identity—how is it different? (3)

12 Part of the choir, or sent out of it, possibly. (6)

13 See 27 down

15 Is the stein not broken by putting cassiterite in it? (8)

16 A real foul-up, if returned like the little company wanted. (6)

18 Coming back with the absence of arrogance, according to the Brits, but he invented a lot of things. (6)

20 One hopes he could steer you out of trouble. (8)

23 Possibly lied about being shiftless. (4)

24 How to emphasize a point on poetic hair. (6)

25 See 15 down

28 Such a boat has several sets of propellers. (7)

29 Used on a paint job, as a lot of gals may want to be. (7)

30 Not heavy coats you see in the movies. (5)

31 Amok girls! They're measures of weight! (9)

DOWN

1 I would shortly get placed in a "Gee-willikers!" situation—with the mate having departed. (5)

2 Certainly not the truth with what the birdy has beneath. Rest assured if you do! (3,4)

3 You can certainly get filled up here! (3,7)

4 You wouldn't expect to find one on your side. (8)

5 Indeed, war debt reveals a reputedly confessing royal. (6)

6 With some change, this still wouldn't count for much. (4)

7 Tell on someone who gets to sing badly, with these possibly being good or bad. (7)

8 Tell someone off, when part of the apparel slips away? (5,4)

14 Does it involve putting someone out? (10)

15 and **25** across One would have no trouble speaking with it. (3,4,2,3)

17 When put on one, many look up to you, being possibly deep at last, which is wrong. (8)

19 Borne by an adversary, when someone like Shakespeare gets sick. (3,4)

21 Get a man in trouble, being a problem of color. (7)

22 You can easily find takers for this—but it's fast when blue. (6)

26 When things are for them, they are not good! One might be just a lark! (5)

27, **13** and **10** across Takes a pretty big sip! (4,4,7)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3187

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I remember the night I gave up on my neck. After a nice dinner out, my husband Steve and I went dancing downtown. We moved like teenagers out on the floor and it felt great... until I hit the ladies room lights. I was shocked. I recognized the face in the mirror and the low-cut black dress was definitely mine. But the neck belonged to someone else. It was wrinkled, tired and made me look 20 years older.

The little black dress went into the closet and for years I hid behind scarves and turtlenecks. I felt too old to dress sexy. My husband was still treating me respectfully, but the romance was slipping. A few less bouquets of flowers and our nights on the town were being replaced by naps on the couch. It felt like we had both given up, but then I found hope.

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